

SLINGSHOT

WHAT IS REALISTIC?

Rejecting the system's limits on the possible

By Kermit

I will remember that night for the rest of my life. After an early morning police raid, supporters of Occupy Oakland converged in the streets and stood up to riot police hurling tear gas canisters, rubber bullets and flash-bang grenades. Despite how grim that sounds, my experience was one of cathartic elation; of being autonomous in a group of people aware of its own power; of having the lines between what I am for and what I am against rendered so clearly.

People around the world are rejecting the perceived inevitability of capitalist states and electoral democracy, citing their own needs for autonomy and community, which are not being met. Issues of class inequality and state violence have been front page news, and the kinds of conversations that it is possible to have with people in this atmosphere seem greatly expanded. Connections are being made between issues on a large scale and the energy generated is not being neatly channeled into small reforms or manipulated by hierarchical political machines.

the occupation itself which are important to explore. Central to these is the tension between the beautiful possibility of this moment and the fact that we are still living within ugly and powerful systems that have trained us to think, speak and act on their terms. Thinking about what it means to be 'realistic' or 'strategic' is one way to map this particular tension usefully.

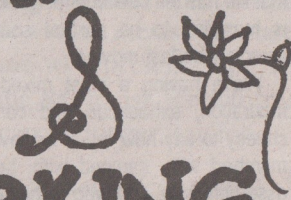
Large systems of calcified power like states, banks and corporations are very good at finding ways to make us believe that our best interest is what drives them, or failing that, that our goals can coexist harmoniously with theirs.

can be discredited easily as unrealistic by those who lack imagination. In this context, it is tempting to reject the concept of realism altogether; to believe that the audacity of demanding everything from our lives and nothing from established power negates any kind of rationality.

In fact, 'being realistic' is useful as a way of analyzing tactics and situations in light of a particular set of goals and desires. If we articulate our desires using only the narrow language of the system, "I want to make more money", then being realistic can only include finding ways to make the system work better



COMMUNITY



WORKING

on

OURSELVES

By enola d!

It has been so inspiring to hear folks I have not had the pleasure of meeting before Occupy Oakland speak out about how we need to be open to hearing criticism from each other and be constantly working on ourselves. At one general assembly, some people spoke out about not feeling comfortable in the camp because they were being hit on by older men or because they were being insulted by homophobes. A proposal to section off a wimmin/queer/trans safer space for camping passed overwhelmingly, and next on stack was an older man announcing a men's group meeting. Angela Davis came to speak at our general strike and her speech was dominated by "kill the ___ inside your head" rhetoric. This kind of thought is obvious to more people than I'd thought before and it is being spread even further. If only one thing comes out of this

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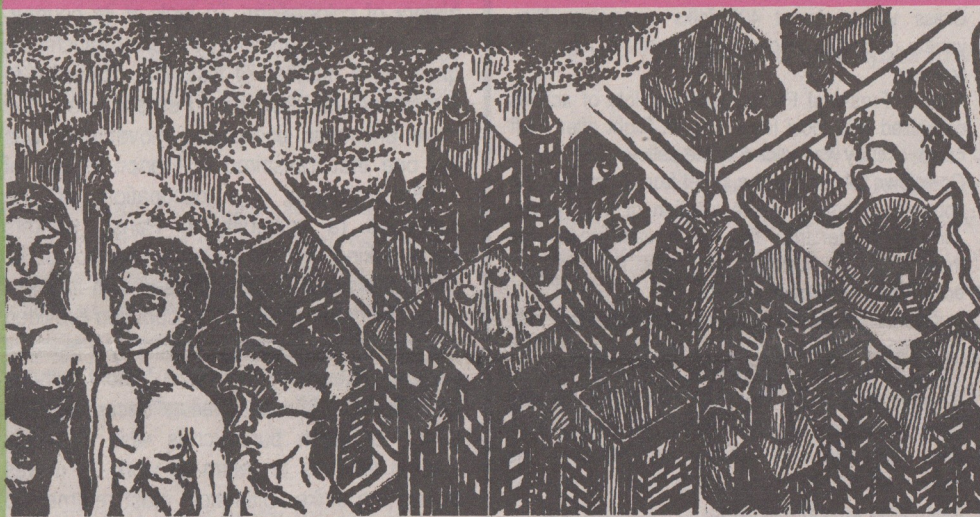
Often, we go through life utterly surrounded by invisible systems which limit the actions and conversations that seem possible; which make any sentiment expressed outside of them seem crazy. Moments that create a rupture in this banality by making those systems visible allow us an opportunity to inhabit space and interact with each other in radically different ways; to become aware of tensions that are ever-present but often hidden and act in ways that did not previously seem possible. At their best, the Occupy actions and other demonstrations that have escalated around the world in the last year have created spaces for people to interact with each other and articulate their desires outside of established frameworks.

Useful realism

There are also tensions that arise as part of

the occupation itself which are important to explore. Central to these is the tension between the beautiful possibility of this moment and the fact that we are still living within ugly and powerful systems that have trained us to think, speak and act on their terms. Thinking about what it means to be 'realistic' or 'strategic' is one way to map this particular tension usefully.

Large systems of calcified power like states, banks and corporations are very good at finding ways to make us believe that our best interest is what drives them, or failing that, that our goals can coexist harmoniously with theirs.



They do this by shaping the conversations we have about what is necessary, possible and desirable; by encouraging us to abandon desires they cannot assimilate and by offering the promise of comfort, safety, and convenience in return.

Appealing to realism is a tactic often used by these systems to convince people that their aspirations are too large. Any good idea or analysis that condemns systems of power or would require a radical shift in the status quo

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In fact, 'being realistic' is useful as a way of analyzing tactics and situations in light of a particular set of goals and desires. If we articulate our desires using only the narrow language of the system, "I want to make more money", then being realistic can only include finding ways to make the system work better

for us. If our goals are understood to be more expansive, "I want to be able to meet my physical and emotional needs", then realistic options include subverting the logic of the system itself.

As the Occupy movement has gained momentum, some have claimed that the only way to be effective is with a centralized organization that can efficiently negotiate with power; they argue that having a specific set of

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on OURSELVES

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Occupations become their own cities. The people participating find new neighbors, new local activities at the library tent or craft tent, new local cuisine at the kitchen tent, and new ways to get even more involved, with various meetings all day long, and then of course there is the general assembly. We can create our own cities and work together every day without the cops and without money. We can create our own cities and provide services for each other that the city will not provide. We can provide free education, free food, free medical attention. We can listen to our neighbors. We

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THE AWAKENING IN AMERICA

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A radical situation is a collective awakening. . . . In such situations people become much more open to new perspectives, readier to question previous assumptions, quicker to see through the usual cons. . . . People learn more about society in a week than in years of academic "social studies" or leftist "consciousness raising." . . . Everything seems possible — and much more is possible. People can hardly believe what they used to put up with in "the old days." . . . Passive consumption is replaced by active communication. Strangers strike up lively discussions on street corners. Debates continue round the clock, new arrivals constantly replacing those who depart for other activities or to try to catch a few hours of sleep, though they are usually too excited to sleep very long. While some people succumb to demagogues, others start making their own proposals and taking their own initiatives. Bystanders get drawn into the vortex, and go through astonishingly rapid changes. . . . Radical situations are the rare moments when qualitative change really becomes possible. Far from being abnormal, they reveal how abnormally repressed we usually are; they make our "normal" life seem like sleepwalking.

—Ken Knabb, *The Joy of Revolution*

By Bureau Of Public Secrets (Oct. 15, 2011)

The "Occupy" movement that has swept across the country the country over the last four weeks is already the most

significant radical breakthrough in America since the 1960s. And it is just beginning. . . .

The ruling elite don't know what's hit them and have suddenly been thrown on the defensive, while the clueless media pundits try to dismiss the movement for failing to articulate a coherent program or list of demands. The participants have of course expressed numerous grievances, grievances that are obvious



enough to anyone who has been paying attention to what's been going on in the world. But they have wisely avoided limiting themselves to a single demand, or even just a few demands, because it has become increasingly clear that every aspect of the system is problematic and that all the problems are interrelated. Instead, recognizing that popular participation is

itself an essential part of any real solution, they have come up with a disarmingly simple yet eminently subversive proposal, urging the people of the world to "Exercise your right to peaceably assemble; occupy public space; create a process to address the problems we face, and generate solutions accessible to everyone. . . . Join us and make your voices heard!" (Declaration of the Occupation of New York City).

Almost as clueless are those doctrinaire radicals who remain on the sidelines glumly predicting that the movement will be coopted or complaining that it hasn't instantly adopted the most radical positions. They of all people should know that the dynamic of social movements is far more important than their ostensible ideological positions. Revolutions arise out of complex processes of social debate and interaction that happen to reach a critical mass and trigger a chain reaction — processes very much like what we are seeing at this moment. The "99%" slogan may not be a very precise "class analysis," but it's a close enough approximation for starters, an excellent meme to cut through a lot of traditional sociological jargon and make the point that the vast majority of people are subordinate to a system run by and for a tiny ruling elite. And it rightly puts the focus on the economic institutions rather than on the politicians who are merely their lackeys. The countless

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SLINGSHOT

Slingshot is an independent radical newspaper published since 1988.

We've pulled together this extra edition devoted to the occupy movement super quickly, running on the surge of enthusiasm pouring out of Occupy Oakland and related developments around the world. We had just finished our last (regularly scheduled) issue when Occupy Oakland started and a lot of us jumped right into the thick of it. We're all having so many intense experiences, meeting so many new people, having so many amazing conversations and taking on so many new projects that life has felt overwhelming, like a blur, electric. It is humbling to be part of something so big, so complex, so fast-moving.

We're having a blast mixed with moments of frustration, exhaustion and confusion. Is it too cheesy to say how much we love the people we've marched with, camped with, been in the general assembly with, and who've helped us through this? There is an amazing community developing on many levels and none of us could do all this without so many others holding down their parts.

Trying to create a coherent paper in just a couple of weeks has been challenging, and we know we've missed a lot of important topics and articles that we hope we can explore in our next issue — just 2 months away. We've each written a few notes here to share topics that didn't make it into an article, but express something about what is going on. Join us and write something about your reality in all this!

Occupy has gifted us the public space to reveal parts of ourselves that had previously remained behind closed doors. Facets of our personalities that had been unable to emerge under the values of isolation and competition are beginning to blossom. Slowly but surely, **we are developing post-capitalist identities.** And once those identities have bloomed, there will be no going back: we will continue to demand the space we need to express them.

And, while some people at Occupy would like us to keep this process hidden—from the media and from each other—we will not let them stamp out the spark. We will not let the fear of looking bad on television derail us from experiencing the inward revolution: the process of decolonizing our behaviors, hearts, and minds. We don't care if it doesn't look pretty to outsiders. Let the media spin whatever they want about us: the pundits and talk

Nov 2: Oakland General Strike: thousands skip work and shut down the Port of Oakland

Nov 9: Occupy Cal begins at UC Berkeley. Those in tents are severely beaten and arrested

Nov 14: Police raid OO camp for 2nd time

Nov 15: UC Davis students occupy Mrak Hall. Occupy Cal strike and Open University. OO marches from Oakland to Berkley to join students

Nov 16: UC regents cancel meeting due to protests. Many march on their corporate sponsors and pitch a tent in the Bank of America in SF

Nov 17: Occupy Cal is raided at 3:30 am; Occupy UCLA begins

Nov 18: UC Davis students are pepper-sprayed in the face while peacefully sitting in their quad in the middle of the day; 2 are hospitalized

The General Strike Poster: The night after Occupy Oakland decided to call the general strike (Thursday), a few *Slingshot* folks discussed making a 17 X 23 inch poster to promote it — in the spirit of autonomous action. Our printing press needed the artwork by 2 pm Friday to get the poster printed by 4:30 Friday afternoon. I sent an email seeking artists but as the clock ticked Friday, it looked like it wasn't going to happen. At noon, Lucis called to say he could do art. We dashed down to the Long Haul and he drew art while I laid out words. I biked to the printer at 2 and by 5 pm, 2,000 posters got delivered to the Occupation. They ended up all over Oakland.

Occupancy Scene Report by hurricane

I lost my housing a month in a half ago, my solution: Travel! Occupy everything! Here's the best to the worst to the swag along the west coast.

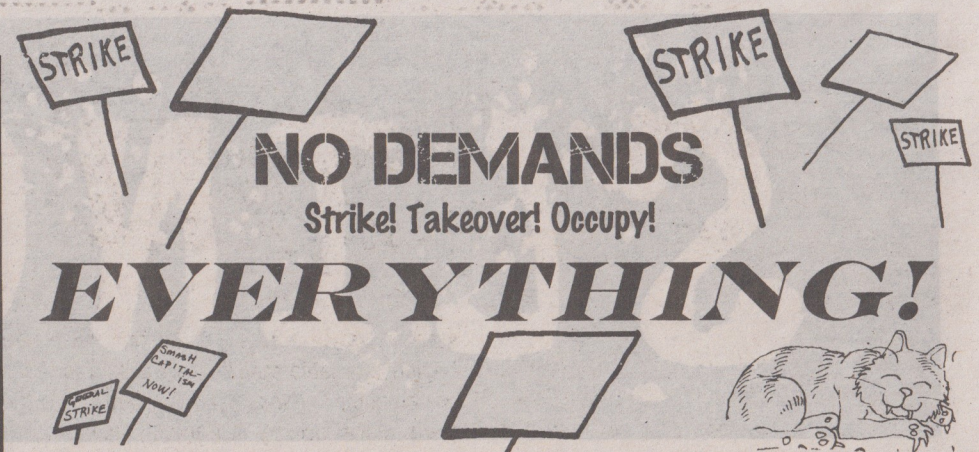
Vancouver BC: Canadians know what's up. Period. Tons of DIY "Nobody For President 2012" signs. Makes no sense, because I'm in fucking Canada.

Grass Valley: About 400 folks occupying. Nice variety of people who wouldn't normally mix. Epic scenery.

Fresno: Fres-yes! Perfect weather, lots of actions organized with local labor unions. Right after I left camp, occupy was raided by the police. Damn!

Downtown LA: Across the street from Occupy is the county courthouse. Same location of the Michael Jackson murder trial. The mainstream media was there to film the outraged protesters. The strangest action I've ever participated in.

Overall I noticed a sense of unwarranted self-



By the Occupation Maintenance Council

Usually coupled with discussions of the fact that the Occupy Movement is largely leaderless, is the subject of demands. Although each Occupy camp is autonomous, and thus different, most of the camps have no demands. The fact is that with an absence of demands, movements effectively reject the logic of representation — a logic that at once disempowers the many and allows for a force to refocus, or manage, the energy of a movement.

Without demands, there is no room made for concessions with power. Instead of focusing on a new round of electoral politics (recall this, vote for that), people must act. This is where the power of no demands comes from. A reclamation of space is certainly powerful. That such reclamations have been generalized throughout the world is incredible. But we cannot think that this is an end in itself. The Occupy camps should continue while looking to expand their function as a space for organizing actions.

Occupation as a political act is not new — its use by those in power is exemplary in the history of colonialism. To look at its counter, the use of occupations by the disenfranchised, gives us a number of historical examples to remember and learn from. Perhaps one of the more enigmatic occupation movements was the one that transpired in France in May of 1968. Following the occupation of the Sorbonne (a university in Paris), workers began taking over the factories they worked in. The generalized tactic was used with the goal of autonomous control — occupation provided

say they actively rejected the efforts of companies, like Monsanto, who had a vested interest in the proliferation of GMO crops).

Their slogan was "occupy, resist, and produce."

So here is the challenge: can we use the occupation to takeover our workplaces and schools in order to reclaim and run them with our own goals in mind? Without bosses, without administrative classes, without politicians, our aim could be redirected towards collective empowerment on a very real level. What is clear is that those unwelcome "managers of society" pursue interests that are counter to the needs of the people. Why not takeover the apparatus of our own disillusionment? A factory that is an instrument of oppression in one hand could be liberatory in another after being repurposed by the workers themselves. Let us strike, forever.

At the point when the takeover is widespread, no longer limited to the public squares that formed the base of this movement, the worker as a subjectivity will soon dissolve. The delineations between employment and leisure (concepts best left to the realm of consumer capitalism) mean less and less as reclaimed enterprises suddenly fulfill a tangible role in our everyday lives. Such a movement "could then have proclaimed the expropriation of all capital, including state capital; announced that all the country's means of production were henceforth collective property of the proletariat organized in direct democracy; and appealed directly (by finally

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In all of the conversations about property damage and police violence, it is difficult sometimes to acknowledge that violent acts also happen *within* our communities. Chaotic moments of violence are part of the society we live in. The state and its financial patrons will always seize selectively on incidents of interpersonal violence as evidence that strong, authoritarian measures are needed to keep people safe. This is not true: at best these measures only push the misery around. More often, they exacerbate it. Emotional responses to trauma caused by institutional violence habitually lead to acts of interpersonal violence. The more our communities are composed of strong connections between people who are resilient and respect their own needs, the more manageable and less likely incidents of interpersonal violence become.

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"We're here, we're queer, burn the fucking banks!"
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Overall I noticed a sense of unwarranted self-importance from the finance committees, everywhere! Just a suggestion to Occupy Camps universally: Money changes everything, money gives the illusion of power, that power needs to be destroyed. Or else money will destroy this movement. Check your privilege and get to know your fellow wingnuts at camp.

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As we are putting the paper together, a series of raids that appear to have been federally coordinated forcibly are evicting Occupy encampments across the country. UC Davis cops are dousing sitting students with pepper spray. In Egypt, the military is murdering protesters in Tahir Square. Just a reminder: don't believe them when they tell you they'll manage your revolution.

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Slingshot New Volunteer Meeting

Volunteers interested in getting involved with

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Occupation as a political act is not new — its use by those in power is exemplary in the history of colonialism. To look at its counter, the use of occupations by the disenfranchised, gives us a number of historical examples to remember and learn from. Perhaps one of the more enigmatic occupation movements was the one that transpired in France in May of 1968. Following the occupation of the Sorbonne (a university in Paris), workers began taking over the factories they worked in. The generalized tactic was used with the goal of autonomous control — occupation provided the means of effectively reclaiming a place of work or enterprise, such as a factory, school, or farm. May '68 was a failure because of the efforts of union bureaucrats who ultimately wanted workers to return to work as it was before the strike. Ultimately most returned to the normal situation of day-to-day alienation under capitalism.

The Landless Workers' Movement in Brazil is another example of a political upheaval based around the reclamation of space. The movement came out of a social climate in which 3% of the country's population owned two-thirds of all arable land. It was, in a sense, an occupation movement concerned both with the equitable distribution of land and sustainable agricultural practices (which is to

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What is clear is that we must be proactive if we are to be effective. The Occupy Movement is at a fork in the road. Will we continue on the path of dead-ends and media fetishizations, or will we come together to reclaim and build a new world? Occupations of public space are certainly valuable. But we must now look to occupy workplaces and schools so that we can manage them in ways that speak to our needs and desires. This is not only possible; it is an essential move in a struggle for economic and social justice.

Creative Inspired and Loud

State Parks and Wild Places Need Decolonization Too

The weekend of Nov.12-13 over 300 people occupied Hendy Woods State Park in southern Mendocino County, CA, one of the last remaining public access old growth redwood groves in the state. The park is slated to be closed as of July 2012 along

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To cops: "You're Sexy! You're cute! Take off your riot suit!"

"MOVE banks, get out the way. Get out the way banks, get out the way!"

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Events that linger fresh in our minds:

Sept 17: Occupy Wall Street camp begins

Sept 24: Video of unprovoked police pepper spraying of women goes viral

Oct 4: First Oakland General Assembly (GA) to discuss starting Occupy Oakland

Oct 11: Occupy Oakland encampment begins

Oct 25: Police raid OO in morning. That evening, 1000 people protest and are tear gassed; Iraq vet Scott Olsen's skull fractured

Oct 26: OO camp re-established, 1600 person general assembly votes to call general strike

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Article Deadline & Next Issue Date

Submit your articles for issue 109 by January 14, 2012 at 3 p.m.

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What is clear is that we must be proactive if we are to be effective. The Occupy Movement is at a fork in the road. Will we continue on the path of dead-ends and media fetishizations, or will we come together to reclaim and build a new world? Occupations of public space are certainly valuable. But we must now look to occupy workplaces and schools so that we can manage them in ways that speak to our needs and desires. This is not only possible; it is an essential move in a struggle for economic and social justice.

Creative Inspired and Loud

State Parks and Wild Places Need Decolonization Too

The weekend of Nov.12-13 over 300 people occupied Hendy Woods State Park in southern Mendocino County, CA, one of the last remaining public access old growth redwood groves in the state. The park is slated to be closed as of July 2012 along with 70 other California state parks due to budget constraints. Occupy Hendy Woods! stated: "We demand a re-prioritization in state budgeting which favors long-term thinking over short-sighted panic-driven 'solutions.' We want a stable budget which favors people, land and public services over corporations and banks. We refuse to sit back and watch our park destroyed by neglect and misuse. Short-term measures, driven by a budget crisis we the 99% did not create, will steal our natural heritage unless we do something about it. We will not let this park close. Let's get creative, inspired and loud!" The local organizers want to network and help inspire others to occupy state parks and other wild places in need of protection, contact occupyhendywoods@gmail.com. An occupation of China Camp State Park in the Bay Area is being planned for January 2012. Contact: fuschiafringe@gmail.com.



Circulation Information / free distribution project

Subscriptions to *Slingshot* are free to prisoners, low income and anyone in the USA with a *Slingshot* Organizer, or \$1 per issue or back issue. International is \$3 per issue. Outside the Bay Area we'll mail you a free stack of copies if you give them out for free. Note: they come in 1 lb. packages - you can order 1 package or up to 6 (6 lbs) for free - let us know how many you want. In the Bay Area, pick up bulk copies for distro at Long Haul or Bound Together Books in SF.

WHAT NEXT?

what have we learned and what can we add now?

By Jesse D. Palmer

As *Slingshot* goes to press, the hundreds of occupations inspired by Occupy Wall Street are struggling to transition tactically from tent cities to other actions that will help the amazing momentum behind the movement to continue and expand. Many occupations have been swept away by police raids and those that still exist face severe challenges from internal dysfunction and winter weather. But the political moment that made the occupy movement possible is not about a particular tactical expression. It can and will continue without tents. In fact, moving beyond tents may help the movement expand since the residential aspect of occupations have eaten up so much energy on camp logistics.

No matter what tactics gain support next,

single issue politics. Almost since the beginning, media pundits have asked for a list of demands — “what do they want?” To the credit of the occupy movement, we’ve mostly avoided reducing our movement to a laundry list of reforms. The key insight of the movement has been that the political / economic system is bankrupt and is the problem. This isn’t just a protest so we don’t want any crumbs the system can give us. We have to resist any effort to hijack the movement by pursuing single issues or to serve particular political parties or union leaderships.

• **Maintaining horizontal structures such as the General Assembly and avoiding the development of leaders or bureaucracies.** All of the three points, above, will be easier if

occupations disrupted business as usual and brought people who were dissatisfied with the system together. Once we found each other, our sense of isolation and powerlessness vanished. In Oakland, the occupation has been the launching pad for numerous marches and actions against banks and other oppressive institutions. This can expand. While taking direct action, we need to figure out ways to target disruption against the rulers and minimize collateral damage where possible. The Oakland general strike is also a model for future wildcat (non-official) job actions that hit the 1% where it hurts — against one company or industry, or in one city, region, or nationally.

The system is fragile economically and politically. It is up to us to figure out all the ways in which its legitimacy is compromised

consider what have we learned over the past couple of months during these occupations, and add aspects that have been missing.

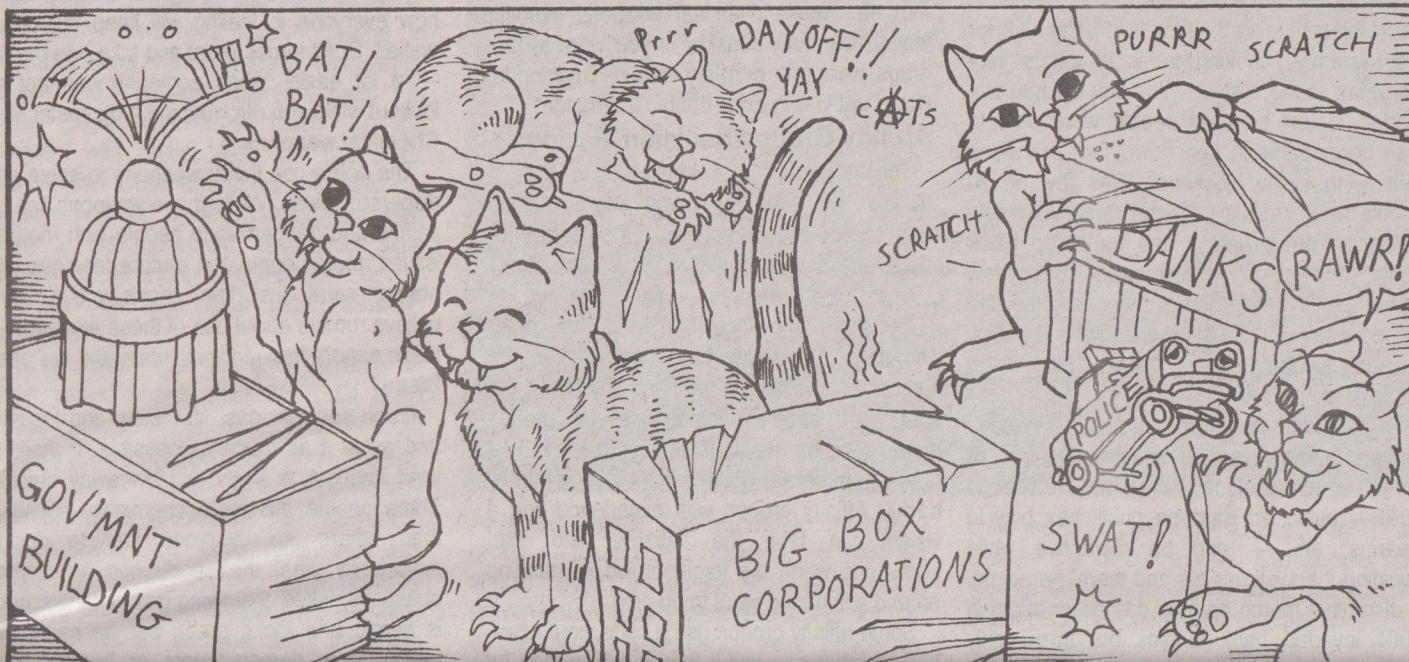
The current eruption of protest is more than just unfocused anger at recession and austerity. It reflects a widespread sense that the system is not working, growing out of the last 40 years of stagnant wages while corporate profits soared. For years, the 1% busted our unions, eliminated living-wage jobs, and privatized social resources with very little resistance. Now, finally, resistance seems to be breaking out all over all at once.

Now is a great time to start diverse discussions about the horrors of capitalism beyond just wealth inequality.

Capitalism has systematically sucked meaning, community and stability from our lives. With all the consumer items and labor saving inventions, we’ve lost our humanity. People want to cooperate and share with those around them, but capitalism requires constant competition, increasing isolation and loneliness, a relentless speed up, and a race to the bottom.

Capitalism is good at making more stuff, making it cheaper, and doing so with fewer people. As people psychologically adapt themselves to these economic goals — attempting to measure satisfaction with material wealth rather than with our connection to ourselves, other people and the world around us — we gradually drive ourselves insane. Consumerism, corporate jobs and mediated suburban life are meaningless. Human beings need more than computers and bank balances — we need freedom, emotional intensity, and un-managed, challenging adventures.

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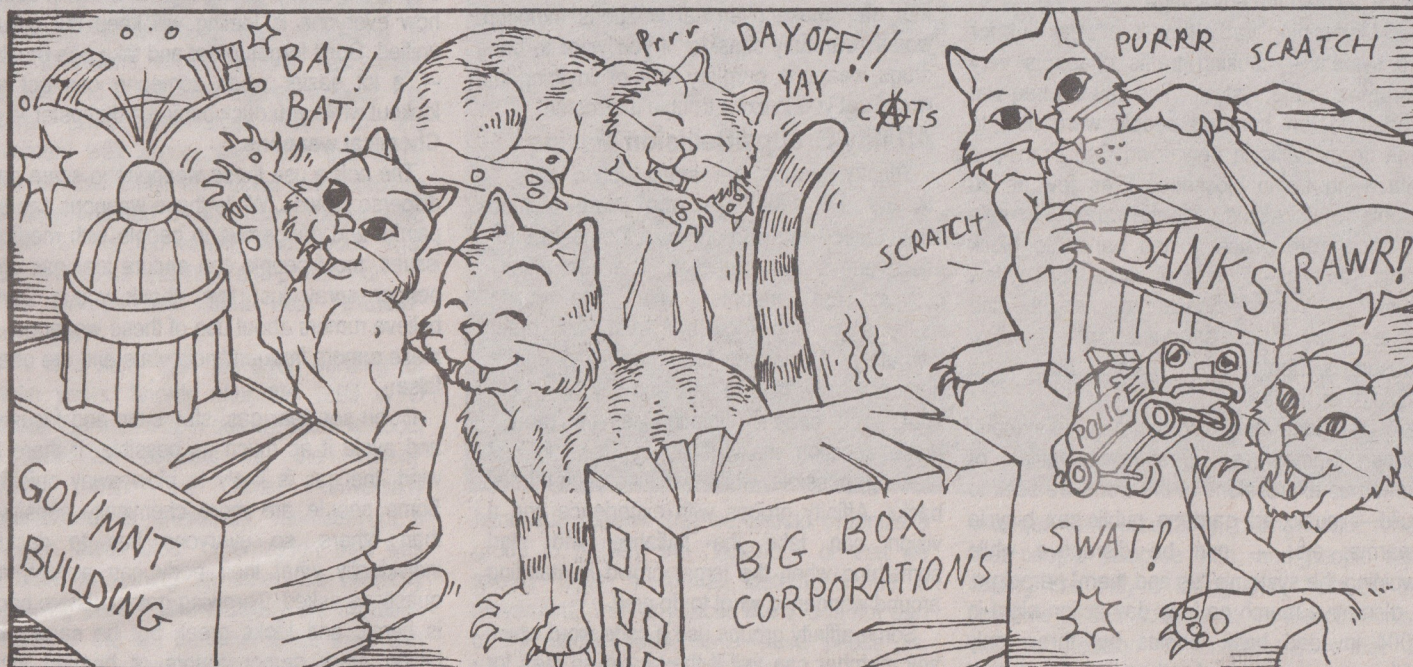
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Moreover, capitalism is killing the planet. Some of the amazing energy behind this movement may be coming from an underlying, almost subconscious sense of despair about the environment. How much of our emotional energy is going to suppress and deny our awareness that the climate is changing, that rivers and oceans are dying, that forests and wild places are shrinking? We have to ignore these things to maintain our sanity as we do what is necessary to exist within this system — driving to work, plugging into the grid, buying our food from industrial farms far away.

The occupy movement can blow the lid off all kinds of un-discussed, unspoken aspects of our economic and political system. While the rhetoric of the 99% is theoretically weak, it is also charmingly and subversively inclusive — folks from many different walks of life with different ideas have to grudgingly agree that they are, in fact, part of the 99%. Most politics and the culture war, etc. have been all about looking at the world based on different assumptions and ideological positions.



the movement has to stick with the key aspects that have made it so extraordinary:

- **Re-defining what is possible.** Now isn't the time to retreat to what may seem "realistic" and limit our ideas or demands to areas defined as acceptable by the system. Two months ago, none of what we have already achieved seemed within reach. The occupy movement is strong when it stretches the world to create its own reality. It is hard to think or write about what to do next precisely because at long last we're in uncharted waters and we don't actually know what is possible. We need to prolong and expand that sense as much as possible and see where it goes. We need to fight anything that is going to end this moment, narrow it, or concede to reality. The most important battlefield is in each of our heads and our collective consciousness — moving beyond the voices from the system that try to limit our imagination.

- **Provoking dialogue and discussion.** In just a couple of months, the occupy movement has dramatically shifted the social landscape by opening long-overdue debate over wealth

we maintain the radical decentralization of the movement. How can we build the sense of community and equality we feel at the General Assembly into the fabric of everyday life? The goal isn't just about running a particular meeting or structure with participatory democracy. Ultimately, these structures change how people treat each other and how each of us approaches the world. Decentralized structures change our assumptions — are other people hostile competitors or our community?

All of us are empowered to expand decentralized spontaneous actions to more neighborhoods and new groups of people. It's up to each of us to take initiative to make this happen — everything that has happened so far has happened without any central leadership deciding it should happen, but rather based on individuals and small groups taking action on their own. Right on!

In Oakland, a number of specific tactical ideas are under discussion as of press time. No doubt more will be dreamed up by the time you read this in towns and cities around the

and exploit those soft spots. Banks, corporations and mainstream electoral politics aren't offering answers, but our direct actions can.

- **Building occupations.** Occupations don't have to be in public parks. Many occupations around the country are experimenting with occupying bank-owned buildings or other buildings needlessly sitting empty because of the failures of the economic system. Closed factories? Closed schools, parks or other public buildings? These actions are highly symbolic and, when successful, provide space safe from the weather with doors to help limit access to individuals bent on disrupting us.

- **Foreclosures.** Another campaign under discussion is to research foreclosed buildings about to go to auction, or families about to lose their homes, and show up to disrupt the process (with the families blessing, of course.)

- **Re-occupation.** Since the second Oakland police raid on November 14, many

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• **Provoking dialogue and discussion.** In just a couple of months, the occupy movement has dramatically shifted the social landscape by opening long-overdue debate over wealth and power inequality and whether the capitalist system is working for the average person. One of the most powerful parts of our General Assemblies has been break-out groups where we talk to people we've never met before about what is wrong with the world, and what we can do to create something new. These discussions have spread throughout society and millions of people are talking about class, power and injustice in new ways and for the



first time in our lives. This explosion of dialogue is powerful. We need to do whatever we can to keep the conversation going and broaden it. Start some conversations with strangers at the bus stop, your neighbors, your family, co-workers, etc. These discussions are extra exciting and fruitful right now.

• **Keeping the focus on the big picture and avoid getting sucked into reformism or**

movement. How can we build the sense of community and equality we feel at the General Assembly into the fabric of everyday life? The goal isn't just about running a particular meeting or structure with participatory democracy. Ultimately, these structures change how people treat each other and how each of us approaches the world. Decentralized structures change our assumptions — are other people hostile competitors or our community?

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In Oakland, a number of specific tactical ideas are under discussion as of press time. No doubt more will be dreamed up by the time you read this in towns and cities around the world. No doubt you can think of some other ideas and do them yourself:

• **Kittens.** Early on, a speaker at the Oakland General Assembly pointed out how all our energy was focused on the few blocks surrounding the occupation, and how much better it might be if we spread our energy around the city talking to folks, organizing and agitating. What would we look like if we were kittens — adorable but with claws — climbing all over the place and getting into everything, as opposed to the herd-like formation of traditional marches?

• **Neighborhood assemblies.** The Occupy Oakland general assembly often involves 400 or more people. For larger cities like this, it may make more sense to break up into smaller neighborhood assemblies or subcommittees of the citywide General Assembly. The Occupy Oakland General Assembly originally met every night, but after 2 weeks switched to four times a week. The nights without a citywide General Assembly could be a time to decentralize.

• **Direct action and strikes.** The initial

corporations and mainstream electoral politics aren't offering answers, but our direct actions can.

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have discussed how to re-occupy the original site downtown. Occupations have numerous components: the general assembly, space for informal discussion, libraries, medic tents, kitchens, kids areas, art supplies for making signs, media tents and residential tents for sleeping. One option under discussion is to continue activities during "legal" daylight hours and develop mobile versions of infrastructure like food, media, etc. — doing everything the occupation did prior to a raid except without residential tents.

Such a strategy could focus our energy on the best parts of the occupation — communication and community — while de-emphasizing the residential aspect, which is the most problematic for us to maintain for our own internal reasons.

In pursuing these transitional tactics, we can

almost subconscious sense of despair about the environment. How much of our emotional energy is going to suppress and deny our awareness that the climate is changing, that rivers and oceans are dying, that forests and wild places are shrinking? We have to ignore these things to maintain our sanity as we do what is necessary to exist within this system — driving to work, plugging into the grid, buying our food from industrial farms far away.

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Occupy changes the lens from "what precisely should happen" to "what position in the system do I occupy and what benefits me?"

What is going on is fundamentally not a left-wing version of the tea party. The tea party has always remained firmly rooted in system-defined limits of what is possible. In fact essential to the tea party are assumptions that the structure of the markets are "natural" and inevitable, and that the US Constitution carries religion-like weight. To the contrary, the occupy movement is all about rejecting tired structures and ways of thinking that are no longer serving us.

The occupy eruption is so extremely exciting because we've broken our isolation and sense of powerlessness. We're finally discussing topics long ignored. And we're not assuming we've lost before we've even started to fight.

TIPS FOR DISRUPTION

By P Wingnut

The proposal to the General Assembly calling for the Oakland general strike stated "All banks and corporations should close down for the day or we will march on them." However, except for shutting down the Port in the evening, only a handful of banks were blockaded and shut down during the strike. Most of the thousands of people in downtown that day stayed close to the occupation except for a few short marches. As a result, while a few blocks were closed to traffic and totally disrupted, it generally seemed like a normal day only a few blocks from the occupation on November 2.

If there is another general strike, the participants will have to determine whether it makes sense to try harder at disrupting business as usual as much as our numbers might allow, or whether a mostly symbolic day of action is enough.

Following are suggestions on how to disrupt business as usual in an urban area:

In a protest, you request change from those

*Tactics that evade
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disruptive*

in power. Direct action is when people ignore those in power and build new forms of social interaction on their own — cooperatively organizing housing, farms, workplaces, etc. Militant disruption falls between traditional protest and direct action — the common situation in which people reject the authority and legitimacy of those in power, yet don't have sufficient social resources to just build a

elsewhere. This keeps police guessing and confused while you're free to cause chaos. The police are organized centrally and use radios which can only communicate between two locations at a time. If we can keep mobile in several different groups, their hierarchical structure has a much harder time keeping track of it all. If you're lucky, you and a group of friends can get together, run through a business district, push some dumpsters into the middle of traffic, and generally run amok. If you keep moving, you'll never see any police because by the time they arrive at a particular location, you'll be gone. Sometimes you can watch cop helicopters to figure out locations cops are concerned with.

The police hope we'll engage them on their level — it is up to us to figure out realms in which we hold the advantage:

- Maintaining traffic flow is a weak link for the system — causing traffic chaos is very disruptive to the system. The day the Iraq war started, a few hundred people were able to shut down traffic in downtown San Francisco with flying traffic blockades. As few as 20 people materialized on the street a safe distance from police, joined hands to block traffic, and stood in the street for a few moments. When police approached, the line melted away. These short interruptions in flow caused a ripple effect blocks away and gridlock for miles.

- Disruption and disorder can take many forms. Sometimes, creating beautiful or humorous expressions of the world we seek to build — music, art, gardens, public sex, bicycle swarms, etc. — can be disruptive while avoiding the system's "us and them" paradigm. A disruptive march on leap day action night in 2004 invaded bank lobbies but threw only

weapons, padding or a disguise. Wear good running shoes. Don't wear contact lenses, loose jewelry, loose long hair or anything the cops can grab, or any oil based skin product that may make chemical weapons exposure worse. Carefully consider if you want to bring drugs, weapons, burglary tools or anything that would get you in extra trouble if arrested.

Affinity Groups/Decision Making

Affinity groups are small action cells — usually 4-8 people — who share attitudes about tactics and who organize themselves for effectiveness and protection. The best affinity groups are people with pre-existing relationships who know and trust each other intimately. Decisions are (hopefully) made democratically, face-to-face and quickly on the spot. In a chaotic situation, affinity groups make decision making (as opposed to just reacting) possible, while watching each others' backs. Affinity groups with experience and a vision can take the initiative and start something when the larger crowd is standing around wondering what to do next.

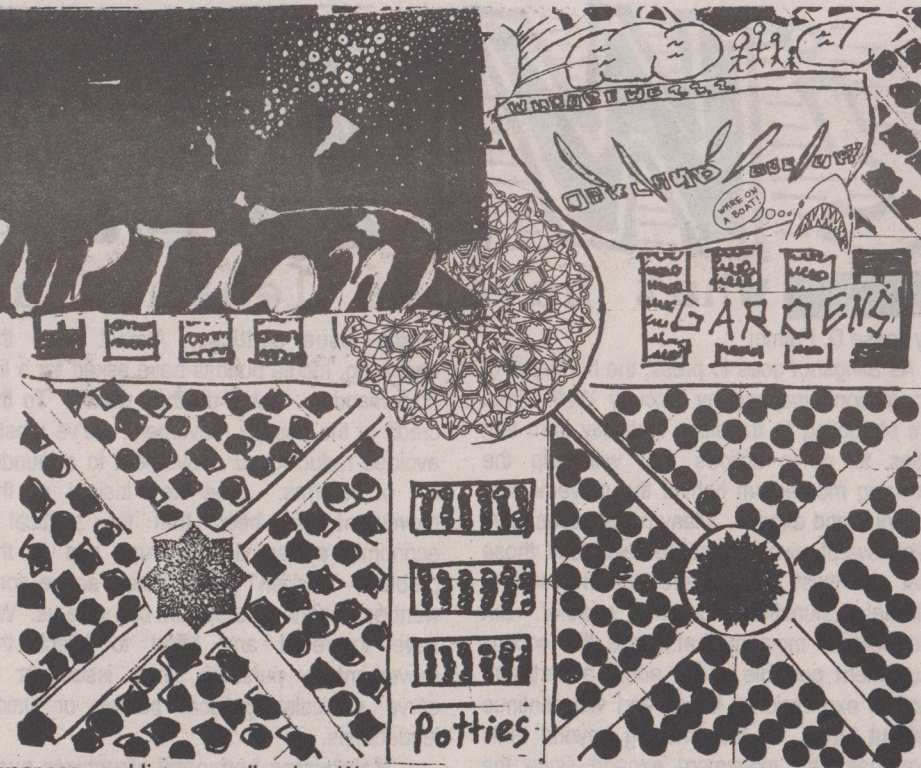
Some affinity groups use a code word which

visible sign or flag to help keep the group together. It is a good idea for everyone in the group to discuss their limits before an action. During the action, taking time to check in about how everyone is feeling will keep the group unified. Don't forget to eat and take pee breaks — a lot easier when someone can act as lookout while you duck behind a dumpster.

Chemical weapons

The police use these weapons to scare and disperse crowds. While these weapons can be painful and dangerous to people with medical issues, most people can endure tear gas and pepper spray just fine, thank you. Don't believe rumors about use of these weapons — these rumors frequently circulate and are often false.

If you see tear gas, stay calm and focused and avoid it as much as possible. If there is wind, the gas is likely to blow away quickly. Some people are more chemically sensitive than others, so everyone has to decide individually what their body can accept, no questions asked. Throwing gas canisters back is heroic and looks great, but be careful of hitting other demonstrators or burning your



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Tactics that evade the police are almost always the most disruptive. All too often, you see would-be militants getting caught up in the cop game by focusing on confronting the police — pushing against a police line, etc. This is a mistake. When you confront the police, it usually results in **order**, not **disorder**, because the police know precisely where you are. They can re-route traffic around you, maintaining productivity and business as usual everywhere else except on your tiny corner until they can amass enough forces to surround and bust your ass.

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What to Bring

For mobility, you want to travel as light as possible and avoid bulky signs, props or costumes. Leave those to the protesters. Carry water in a squirt bottle for drinking and to treat chemical weapons. Use a fanny pack or bag that doesn't get in the way in case you have to run. Not everyone has to adopt the black bloc uniform — it can be like wearing a huge target on your ass. You may be able to get away with more if you're dressed so you don't stand out.

If weather permits, water repellent clothes protect skin from pepper spray. Layers are good because they provide padding and can be used for disguise/escape. In hot weather, dress comfortably — avoiding heatstroke and dehydration so you can run is way more important than protection from chemical

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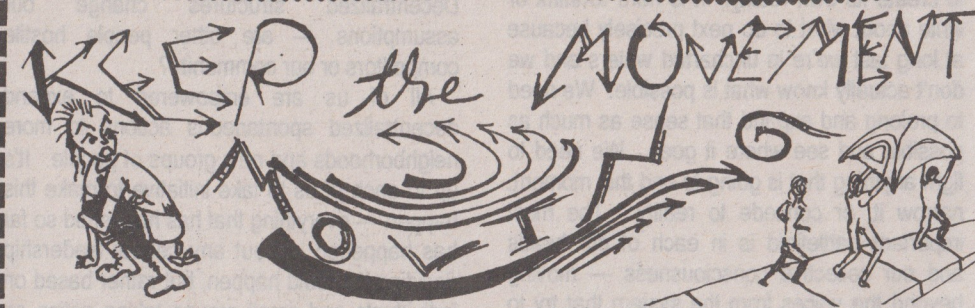
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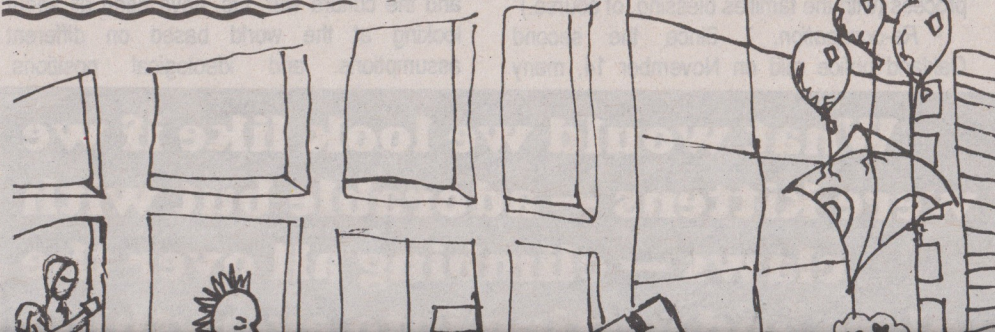


By Christof Andre

As a participant in both the Occupy Oakland and Occupy SF movements, I have experienced three police raids on our camps— residents' tents and sleeping bags trampled, bookcases splintered, kitchens demolished, and all thrown into dump trucks to be hauled to the city dump.

I understand the legitimate reasons for protestors to intentionally let themselves be arrested, to make a stand, and to test back-

arrested, we had a system of rapidly and effectively deconstructing our camps, so that they could be brought back the next morning after the police have left. What we need are guerilla tactics such as having a committee in charge of organizing folks in the event of a police raid to rapidly dismantle and move the camp. Such a committee could see to it that kitchens and more permanent constructions



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An effective resistance movement needs the ability to move about freely

aggression towards the movement. I also understand the necessity of our sustainable camps and the resources and facilities they bring to those who don't have access to them under our current system, and the need for us to be physically occupying space in our protests. Considering this, but also realizing that our current modes of occupation leave both our resources and ourselves vulnerable to police attack, I propose a change of tactics.

Suppose if, instead of standing our ground every police raid and getting our gear smashed, our bodies beaten, and our friends

Although we call ourselves occupiers, we are in effect the resistance: the resistance to oppressive and illegitimate aspects of our current oligarchical system and to the status quo as it stands. An effective resistance movement needs the ability to move about freely, and not be tied down to any one space for any given period of time. We should stop trying to fight the police on their terms. They will always have enough handcuffs, jail cells, and manpower to deal with our encampments as they exist now. So let them keep coming by the hundreds and "force" us out. We'll just be back in the morning none the worse for wear.



OAKLAND GENERAL STRIKE

SOME CRITICAL NOTES

By Nestor Makhno /MYEP

My personal experience of the Nov. 2nd general strike in Oakland was that it was a blast. The event was beautiful and exhilarating — even the colors in the sky were perfect! More importantly, as the first attempt at a general strike in a U.S. city in sixty-six years, I hope Nov. 2nd in Oakland can stir a long-suffering and silent wage-earning class in the United States to see the collective power we can have when we use a mass-scale workplace walkout as a political weapon against the owners of America. This is a gift to our future from the Occupy movement as a whole, and in particular a tribute to the outward-directed and working class focus of Occupy Oakland. Today in the Occupy movement, Oakland leads the way.

The ever-more-alienated internet is now saturated with exhaustively detailed first-person accounts of this event and I don't need to add to these. I'm not out to revel in a self-indulgent buzz. The San Francisco Bay Area anti-authoritarian protest-scenester-scene is at its most limber and energetic when patting itself on its back, reveling in imaginary victories, celebrating its manifest failings as glorious victories, and proclaiming the limits of its current endeavors as the highest possible point that future efforts can aspire to.

The word 'strike' means "to hit with force" (Webster's dictionary). Except for a few large windows of some wholly appropriate businesses, nothing got hit with force in Oakland on Nov. 2, 2011. It may be years until we have some accurate figure of the number

of course in Uncle-Sam-Land everybody is "middle class," only some have a lot more money than others. All this has preempted the emergence of a collective class awareness, even in a rudimentary defensive sense, let alone a widespread, conscious, irreconcilable, collective hostility to our exploiters and to the political and ideological mechanisms of their power. Fortunately, as the often tedious and dogmatic ultra-left Marxist Amadeo Bordiga noted, action tends to precede consciousness, and the simple fact that a general strike of sorts was attempted in Oakland in November

devoid of any threat of action. Participation of unions in an effort like this is like asking the U.S. Department of Labor to organize a general strike. Unions are capitalist business organizations — they cannot be transformed into something other than this by combative members, or compelled to act as anything other than transmission belts from capital to labor that help adjust labor to the requirements of capital. Eighty years of repressive labor legislation have also tied capital's labor brokerages at the ankles, wrists and elbows to capitalist legality and to the capitalist state.

using direct action methods, appealing to immediate needs, and do this with an uncompromising anti-capitalist message. This is no small task, and unions will do nothing to help us here.

The admirable and exemplary targeting by Black Bloc youth of windows of a store of the despicable market-libertarian-owned Whole Foods Market chain during the 2 p.m. "anti-capitalist" march points the way to where the Occupy movement must now go; into a much deeper involvement with the everyday life struggles of the mainstream wage-slave class



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The word 'strike' means "to hit with force" (Webster's dictionary). Except for a few large windows of some wholly appropriate businesses, nothing got hit with force in Oakland on Nov. 2, 2011. It may be years until we have some accurate figure of the number of people who actually walked off the job in Oakland on Nov. 2nd, but my guess is that it was something less than 15% of the city's wage earners. Below 10% might be even more likely.

A "strike" that the boss gives you permission to take part in isn't really a strike. On Nov. 2nd in Oakland this meant:

1. Employees represented by the California Nurses Association making use of their sick days,
2. Oakland City government employees were given permission from the city to "participate,"
3. And the occasionally leftist-jargon-slinging port worker's union, the ILWU, needed to have masses of protesters block the gates to port facilities, and with this in place got an official mediator to approve of one of the port worker's shifts being cancelled. Other ILWU members went to work during an earlier shift on the day of the general strike.

A strike has to have some forcible, breaking-all-the-normal-rules, disruptive and destructive

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Strikers block the port of Oakland, November 2, 2011

2011 may generate some awareness of the potential that an action like this can have among a wider U.S. audience.

Before the strike, the call for a city-wide walkout was not publicized in an even minimally adequate way. On the Saturday night before the Wednesday strike we had a march to the Oakland City Jail with a thousand people chanting anti-cop slogans. Two nights later I walked the length of Telegraph Avenue, one of Oakland's main streets, from the center of downtown Oakland to the Berkeley border, a distance of several miles, and saw a total of less than two dozen handbills slapped up in a desultory manner, and these mostly along a short stretch in the semi-hipsterized/gentrified Temescal District. My guess is that this paucity of propaganda applied equally to other main

The fact that unions are sociologically made up of working class people doesn't make them an expression of the class interests of their members, much less of the working class as a whole. The U.S. Army is for the most part made up of individuals who are sociologically working class in origin, but that doesn't make the Army a "working class organization."

Organizers at Occupy Oakland were probably and quite understandably overwhelmed by the task they had set for themselves in calling for a general strike, and they only had about six days to prepare for it and get the word out. Trying to get unions involved may have seemed like some kind of short cut into the world of the mainstream working class. It wasn't. And it won't be next time either.

in capitalist America, from a public, highly visible, aggressive anti-market/anti-money/anti-wage labor perspective. And for all its viscerally satisfying qualities, bricks through the windows of deserving capitalist enterprises aren't going to draw in the large numbers of hard-pressed mainstream working people who have so much to gain from mobilization in a new mass social movement. The bricks can come later. A few broken windows won't scare off the work-within-the-system types, either. Liberals of the MoveOn.org stripe and leftists including or akin to the A.N.S.W.E.R. Coalition are the deadly enemies of any liberatory potential that the Occupy movement has, but these counter-subversives have to be politically combatted and defeated in an open debate where the only weapon will be the

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A strike has to have some forcible, breaking-all-the-normal-rules, disruptive and destructive qualities to be a true act of social or class rebellion. It has to damage the economic interest of the bosses, and this didn't happen with the strike on Nov. 2nd. Among other negative indicators here, I haven't seen the bourgeois media offering any public estimate of money lost to businesses from the strike. You can generally count on this after similar episodes in all those other countries where the working class has been more assertive of its interests than we've been. An actual one-day general strike would deliver an economic rabbit-punch to the bourgeoisie, and if they had taken a real hit this way we would have heard them acting martyred about it afterward.

Still, this doesn't mean that Nov. 2nd was a failure. The majority of working people in the contemporary U.S. are many generations distant from any directly lived experience of collective workplace-based confrontation with capital, let alone a large-scale, city-wide event taking the form of a mass workplace walkout. From the car culture to hip-hop, we've been subjected to an ever-more sophisticated hundred-year-long psychological operations campaign of consumer society that tells us that we are all free and atomized individuals. And

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The main routes of the bus system AC Transit, major bus stops and BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) could have and should have been used as a platform for the message in the form of mass postering and flyering. This did not happen in the build-up to the general strike. In the days leading up to Nov. 2nd, rank and file union members and low-level union bureaucrats came to meetings of the Occupy Oakland General Assembly. Many of these folks sincerely tried to get their unions involved in the build-up to the general strike. Some union locals generated pious statements

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A STRIKE HAS TO HAVE SOME FORCIBLE, BREAKING-ALL-THE-NORMAL-RULES, DISRUPTIVE AND DESTRUCTIVE QUALITIES TO BE A TRUE ACT OF SOCIAL OR CLASS REBELLION.

Today almost ninety percent of U.S. wage slaves aren't members of labor unions. Among those who are union members, those who have any strong opinions at all about unions are as likely to have negative perceptions of "their" union as positive ones, and they may see "their" union as a wholly bureaucratic entity that steals dues from their pay and is either indifferent or actively hostile to their needs.

Any real future general strike has to do an end-run around unions. All future efforts of this sort will have to draw many energetic individuals to get the word out in a big way,

in capitalist America, from a public, highly visible, aggressive anti-market/anti-money/anti-wage labor perspective. And for all its viscerally satisfying qualities, bricks through the windows of deserving capitalist enterprises aren't going to draw in the large numbers of hard-pressed mainstream working people who have so much to gain from mobilization in a new mass social movement. The bricks can come later. A few broken windows won't scare off the work-within-the-system types, either. Liberals of the MoveOn.org stripe and leftists including or akin to the A.N.S.W.E.R. Coalition are the deadly enemies of any liberatory potential that the Occupy movement has, but these counter-subversives have to be politically combatted and defeated in an open debate where the only weapon will be the

weapon of language.

For all its admirable, spontaneous, anti-hierarchical and tremendously positive aspects, the Occupy movement in the United States is still just not enough of a mainstream working people's movement. The problems with the Oakland General Strike prove that this is absolutely the direction that the Occupy movement must go in now.

MAINSTREAM WORKING PEOPLE, INCLUDING THE UNEMPLOYED, AND ENLISTED PEOPLE IN THE ARMED FORCES ARE THE PEOPLE WHO ARE GOING TO MATTER MOST



A Medic's Tale



INTERVIEW WITH AN OCCUPY OAKLAND STREET MEDIC

By Darin

Following is an interview with Amanda, a street medic active in Occupy Oakland.

What does it mean to be a medic at Oscar Grant Plaza?

To be a medic at Oscar Grant Plaza is a commitment to social change. Over the past month at the occupation, our perceptions of what Occupy is and what it stands for have changed. As medics we have had to adapt to the reality on the ground. The movement and the camp have a different reality. Without the power of the supporters and marches the camp would have not survived this long. Without the campers securing the camp the general assembly and organizers would not have had the community space for actions and meetings.

After the first raid the demographic of the camp started to change from the activist community to more of the general population of the camp being the disenfranchised community who are the most affected by the situations we as the Occupy Movement are confronting. As medics, we have to adapt to the reality of the camp—poverty and the desperate behavior, health conditions and the darkness that comes with it.

Another facet of being a medic at the plaza is keeping the camp safe at night. Although the medic tent was rarely quiet during the day, if the camp had an emergency at night that it couldn't handle, the cops or fire department would have come in to respond, thus

advocate for homeless youth, rainbow gathering experience has been drawn upon, too...

What was your first experience with Occupy Oakland?

As I was coming into Oakland on a Greyhound bus, I saw several helicopters circling downtown, and I thought to myself "That must be where the occupation is."

As I was walking onto the grounds for the

aware Occupy was not going to be the utopia some may have wished for.

Why medic?

I had it in my head that I would work first aid, since that is an applicable part of my background. However, at first I did not feel exactly welcomed by other medics, maybe even unwelcome. I tried not to take it

Can you tell us about any defining moments during the encampment?

I returned to the medic tent one evening after attending to a disturbing medical situation. I do have to say that when working on the ground, you have to put a lot of personal baggage away and be present for the situations at hand, often processing things later. So I returned to the first aid tent to find two children ages 3 and 5 putting band aids on their ouchies. Amused by their presence, I greeted them and shortly asked if their mom or dad was around. The first child responded "My daddy's dead. He was shot in the arm and leg 'cause a bad guy was breaking into our building shooting people." The second child responded "My daddy is in jail for a long time." The two children then proceeded into a conversation about violence, the police system, how this affects their lives, human nature, and how they themselves cope and support their families. This is the reality for preschool aged children in 2011. This fight is really about them. What America has become needs something bigger than band aids.

What would you change about the camp or what do you think we could work on?

Occupy seems hardly tangible at this point. It is the definitive truth. It is raw, spontaneous, alive. The movement is its own being, an exposé on reality. The people have to, at this point, let history take its course. We as individuals have no control over what Occupy



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Another facet of being a medic at the plaza is keeping the camp safe at night. Although the medic tent was rarely quiet during the day, if the camp had an emergency at night that it couldn't handle, the cops or fire department would have come in to respond, thus weakening our ability to keep the camp alive.

If you want to march in the streets and chant "fuck the police," we better learn to do our job.

Can you tell us a little about your history and experience with being a medic and with politics?

I volunteered in a rural fire department for a few years, was an EMT, wilderness first responder, I have personally been homeless off and on for 14 years, did forest defense, have worked in day shelters, been an

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first time (on the third day of the occupation), I was approached by a man who asked me if I needed help pitching my tent. I politely said no thank you, then he asked me if I wanted to stay in his tent, receiving a much more aggressive no thank you. Then he asked me if I wanted to smoke some pot, and he received a hearty fuck off. I moved along, trying to orientate myself. The situation repeated with another aggressor. At this point I became

personally. On one of the first nights I was there I cruised by medical and found one of my favorite Oakland street people needing psychological support. I was overjoyed she was still alive, it had been a few years since we'd crossed paths. At that point I identified my niche. Everyone who lives at the Occupation has one and it is crucial for the success of this movement for this to be honored and supported.

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What would you change about the camp or what do you think we could work on?

Occupy seems hardly tangible at this point. It is the definitive truth. It is raw, spontaneous, alive. The movement is its own being, an exposé on reality. The people have to, at this point, let history take its course. We as individuals have no control over what Occupy is, we only have control over the ideology of what Occupy is. As for the people of the movement, we must resign all desire for control. Empowerment, individual action and decentralization are the keys to breaking down the systems that control our culture. Control got us in this mess in the first place. We have to become willing to adapt to the changes we are asking for, and assume responsibility for what the government doesn't do for us. This is our future: empty houses, empty bellies, empty schools.

Doing Something Good

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Doing Something Good

By Lazy Susan

All across the country masses of people are becoming radicalized through their exposure to the violent and dehumanizing tactics of the police, yet many people of color expect to be stopped, frisked, beaten or arrested on any given day. The occupy movement seeks to be all-inclusive, but can we simply re-appropriate without acknowledging the pre-existing meaning of the word "occupy"? We are used to a world in which the military occupies communities of color overseas and the police occupy communities of color inside the US and people of color occupy a hugely disproportionate number of prison cells. As black cultural theorist and journalist Greg Tate wrote in the Village Voice, "Out there on the street, though all we need is to feel like you got our backs like we got yours, herein might lie the rub. People fresh to the daily struggle might need to earn our trust more. Clearly we're in no hurry to make loads of new friends spanking new to police brutality."

In Oakland and many other places, people of color are a big part of the Occupy Movement, but there are inevitable racial tensions arising out of culture clashes and mutual distrust. Racial oppression, exclusion, and fear of different cultures are so ingrained in all of us that it may not be possible to

achieve a genuine consensus in massive public forums. Therefore it is exciting to hear that some people of color are organizing local autonomous neighborhood assemblies to establish their goals and desires for the larger movement.

An organization calling itself Occupy the Hood (www.officialoccupythethehood.org) has established a presence on Youtube, Twitter and Facebook, with links to chapters across the country, and Denise Oliver Velez published an inspiring blog posting in the Daily Kos asserting that the Occupy Movement can incorporate the concerns and causes of communities of color. For example, Occupy

Flagstaff in Arizona has been raising awareness of a plan to cover a mountain sacred to native tribes with snow manufactured from treated waste-water, as well as a plan to reinstate uranium mining around the Grand Canyon. Occupy the Hood Boston was specifically initiated to address issues impacting their own community, in particular police brutality and the system's indifference to inner city violence. One of Occupy the Hood Boston's founders said that she, like many others who have lost family members to violence, simply wants peace of mind when it comes to living in the hood; "If they can sit in the South End [Boston] at one in the morning

drinking cappuccino and not have a fear of being shot then the same thing should happen here."

It seems obvious that the Occupy Movement should mean the same thing for communities of color that it does for white people, but the methods and/or tactics used to realize that vision might be very different. Compared to most of the other Occupy movements, which rely on hand signals, stacks, and group facilitators, Occupy the Hood Boston is a bit more reminiscent of the organizational structure of the civil rights movement, but without leaders. Any member can propose an action and those who agree form a 'Coalition of the Willing' and take direct action. Participants in the General Assemblies of most other Occupy movements must be on stack and use hand signals for the chance to be heard, while OTHB participants need only to rise and speak. This freewheeling nature of Occupy the Hood allows for vigorous debate and unrestrained free speech.

Despite their differences, it should be noted that all of the Occupy movements are essentially fighting for the same thing, each using the strength of its collective voice to create awareness of social and economic injustice. Occupy the Hood is simply representing the people most grossly affected.





Occupy is not a photo opp

By Samara Steele

Amy doesn't tend to wear clothes. When I first moved into Bird House, a co-op on the Berkeley-Oakland border, I was a bit startled whenever I encountered Amy's curvy, bare, tattooed body passing me in the hall, washing dishes, sitting down for dinner—completely exposed, no shame, not a quiver of fear.

It took me a few weeks to get used to my new housemate, and to realize that, for Amy, being naked isn't about sex or being sexualized. She simply isn't ashamed of her body so she doesn't hide it.

So, a few weeks ago, Amy was volunteering at the Occupy San Francisco kitchen, ladling baked beans onto the plates of hungry occupiers. As she did this, she was wearing pants, but had left her bra and shirt back in the tent.

As folks moved through the line, some grinned and blushed at Amy's bare breasts.

that values symbols (grades, money, status, etc) more than the quality of our shared experience.

"Well," the woman continued to yelp at Amy, "I hope you realize you've made yourself into a sex object to every male here!"

"Now that just ain't true!" interjected a middle-aged man who was sitting nearby.

He stood up and calmly explained that the Occupy SF encampment is a place of love and community, and that seeing Amy's breasts wasn't going to make anyone stop loving her. "It's Amy's body. And if she don't want to cover it, she don't have to."

Throughout our media-saturated lives, we are conditioned to believe that our naked bodies are a symbol. A symbol of sex. A symbol of shame. A symbol of liberation, even. But our bodies don't need to represent anything. Symbols need only penetrate as deep as we let them. To Amy, Amy's body

In it for the LONG HAUL

By Suzanne

We are in it for the long haul, within this movement that has finally emerged. Folks in the US are waking up from such an extraordinary trance. We are so beautiful, discovering more of our strength daily, bracing for the ups and downs. There have to be ups to be downs that are necessary in order for us to learn. And we must find ways to sustain what we are doing because this is going to take us some time. So I share my thoughts in this moment and am excited to hear yours too!

The movement that we are creating is on a scale unlike what any of us have engaged in before. We are learning how to care for our neediest comrades and work together across huge racial, class and cultural divides. We're creating a new way of engaging as a society, realigning our values and priorities, and getting more folks to come along. We can't be in a hurry. The work isn't just for the end results — the process and the time we take matter. We need to give ourselves the space to learn from our mistakes.

Even in the cases in which we think we cannot stand something one of us is saying, we need to see if we're ultimately seeking the same things. We may be on the same team but playing different positions. The new reality we are creating will include ways of thinking, organizing and living that we currently think are impossible. Tactical differences that may appear to divide us may really be aligned. There can be space to respectfully disagree on particular points while still appreciating the efforts and results of people going at things a different way. None of us have to do it all or know it all or have all of the answers ourselves. If you can't understand something

differently. We can still think differently and feel aggravated inside as we build our capacity to not react and shut others out.

If we cannot find ways to talk to people a few steps to our left or right within a general assembly or an occupation, who are we fooling when we think we can change the whole muthafucker? Stretching to make a just world isn't supposed to be easy, or pretty, or without broken things. And yet we can't actually break everything, because some of it (our relationships, the earth, young folks...) are worth our care and protection.

Don't forget the amazing things you were likely doing before the occupy phenomenon. They were important, the glimpses of hope that were adding together to exponentiate this that we are in now. While we are reinventing things from scratch, it is important that we continue to breathe life into the things that hold our lessons and wisdom.

Oh my — do we need to take breaks. And remember: from each according to ability, to each according to need — that anarchist thing. We don't all have the same amount of time, energy, strength, money, skin privilege. We can be super aware of the power we have given the ways we are able to step forward, the responsibilities we have. We are actually worth caring for.

Every time I engage in a GA or at the camp, or on the marches, or just about town, I find something surprising, inspiring, mortifying, infuriating. Big emotions. These are events most of us secretly never believed we would see. This isn't just about external politics or power and economics — minds and hearts are growing and changing and...

By Samara Steele

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As folks moved through the line, some grinned and blushed at Amy's bare breasts. Others hardly seemed to notice the toplessness and thanked Amy for preparing the food. As Amy does at home, she smiled at everyone who moved through the line, warmly telling them, "I love you."

And then a woman in a shoulder-padded blazer pushed through the line and confronted Amy.

"And what exactly are you trying to prove?" the woman spat.

"...nothing," came Amy's soothing, gender-neutral voice.

The woman's eyes darted from Amy's bare breasts to her Mother Mary tattoo to her unconventional haircut (half of Amy's head is buzzed, while the other half has chin-length locks).

A tight frown crossed the woman's face and she said, "I hope you realize you're misrepresenting the whole movement with your childish behavior!"

This type of internal-policing has broken out in Occupy encampments nationwide.

Unable to grapple with the idea of a true autonomous zone, self-conscious occupiers obsessively try to force everyone else to fit their preconceived notions of what the movement should look like. These people

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that values symbols (grades, money, status, etc) more than the quality of our shared experience.

"Well," the woman continued to yelp at Amy, "I hope you realize you've made yourself into a sex object to every male here!"

"Now that just ain't true!" interjected a middle-aged man who was sitting nearby.

He stood up and calmly explained that the Occupy SF encampment is a place of love and community, and that seeing Amy's breasts wasn't going to make anyone stop loving her. "It's Amy's body. And if she don't want to cover it, she don't have to."

Throughout our media-saturated lives, we are conditioned to believe that our naked bodies are a symbol. A symbol of sex. A symbol of shame. A symbol of liberation, even. But our bodies don't need to represent anything. Symbols need only penetrate as deep as we let them. To Amy, Amy's body represents nothing more than it is: a body. And by letting go of the symbols society has attempted to attach to our flesh, we can begin the slow process of occupying ourselves.

The shoulder-padded woman shook her head in disgust and walked away.

Amy thanked the man for his words.

He smiled. "I meant them."

neediest comrades and work together across huge racial, class and cultural divides. We're creating a new way of engaging as a society, realigning our values and priorities, and getting more folks to come along. We can't be in a hurry. The work isn't just for the end results — the process and the time we take matter. We need to give ourselves the space to learn from our mistakes.

Even in the cases in which we think we cannot stand something one of us is saying, we need to see if we're ultimately seeking the same things. We may be on the same team but playing different positions. The new reality we are creating will include ways of thinking, organizing and living that we currently think are impossible. Tactical differences that may appear to divide us may really be aligned. There can be space to respectfully disagree on particular points while still appreciating the efforts and results of people going at things a different way. None of us have to do it all or know it all or have all of the answers ourselves. If you can't understand something or you really hate it, it may help to give others a chance to explain its value.

One of the best things about the general assembly is that we try to listen to each other even when we want to boo and hiss. Sometimes new folks boo and hiss and then our facilitators remind us that we are practicing hearing the opinions of people that think

likely doing before the occupy phenomenon. They were important, the glimpses of hope that were adding together to exponentiate this that we are in now. While we are reinventing things from scratch, it is important that we continue to breathe life into the things that hold our lessons and wisdom.

Oh my — do we need to take breaks. And remember: from each according to ability, to each according to need — that anarchist thing. We don't all have the same amount of time, energy, strength, money, skin privilege. We can be super aware of the power we have given the ways we are able to step forward, the responsibilities we have. We are actually worth caring for.

Every time I engage in a GA or at the camp, or on the marches, or just about town, I find something surprising, inspiring, mortifying, infuriating. Big emotions. These are events most of us secretly never believed we would see. This isn't just about external politics or power and economics — minds and hearts are growing and changing and we're on a powerful adventure. I hold myself gently as all this emerges, knowing that thankfully I don't have to do it all. I am not alone. I get even more excited when I consider the young people growing up right now that think this is normal, that will be politicized from this moment on. What seeds are we sowing my comrades? Such beautiful seeds.

Occupy didn't start on Wall St.

By Lazy Susan

Events of the last few months feel exciting and truly unprecedented given the way things have been going for decades. Through the occupy movements, we in the US have joined a global struggle against social injustice and economic tyranny. While it may be true that the whole world is watching in wonder and astonishment, it is more because the US is the heart of the neo-liberal monster, not because we have invented anything here.

Tunisia, Egypt, Algeria, Libya, Yemen, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Spain, Morocco and Greece are just a few of the countries with recent protest movements that started before

making. In Spain there has been an urge to censor any person or group that called itself anarchist or advocated the explicit use of non-passive resistance.

Peter Gelderloos wrote an article in Counterpunch describing the May 15 movement in Spain, how the movement started, and how participants in Barcelona carried the spark of revolution home to their neighborhoods after the police crackdown forced them out of the Plazas. He also details what he sees as the challenges to the US occupy movement, such as the more transient and less rooted nature of our culture, the fact

A warning that bears repeating about the overly simplistic analysis embodied by the rhetoric of "the 99%" is how, in times of economic hardship, appeals to populism have lead to fascism in Europe. It could happen here if certain interests latch on to the linkage of nationalism and radicalism.

What I find most hopeful in Spain are accounts of the neighborhood assemblies, which are as diverse politically as the movement itself, but some of which have come to embrace anticapitalist goals and are committed to disrupting the plan to dismantle our communities in the name of economic

the food. As Amy sat at home, she smiled at everyone who moved through the line, warmly telling them, "I love you."

And then a woman in a shoulder-padded blazer pushed through the line and confronted Amy.

"And what exactly are you trying to prove?" the woman spat.

"...nothing," came Amy's soothing, gender-neutral voice.

The woman's eyes darted from Amy's bare breasts to her Mother Mary tattoo to her unconventional haircut (half of Amy's head is buzzed, while the other half has chin-length locks).

A tight frown crossed the woman's face and she said, "I hope you realize you're misrepresenting the whole movement with your childish behavior!"

This type of internal-policing has broken out in Occupy encampments nationwide.

Unable to grapple with the idea of a true autonomous zone, self-conscious occupiers obsessively try to force everyone else to fit their preconceived notions of what the movement should look like.

**self-conscious occupiers
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mistake representation for reality: they think that the news blurbs, photos, and videos are the movement. It is as if these people have internalized the media—news-cameras gazing out at them from within, driving them to perform Occupy instead of living their experience of it.

But Occupy is not a photo opp.

At encampments from New York to San Francisco to everywhere, people from all backgrounds are revealing themselves to each other, talking out their differences, agreeing to disagree, and healing from all these many years of suffering under an oppressive system

attempted to attach to our flesh, we can begin the slow process of occupying ourselves.

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Tunisia, Egypt, Algeria, Libya, Yemen, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Spain, Morocco and Greece are just a few of the countries with recent protest movements that started before Occupy Wall Street but mirror our own. This is a worldwide moment we joined when we pitched tents in our local parks.

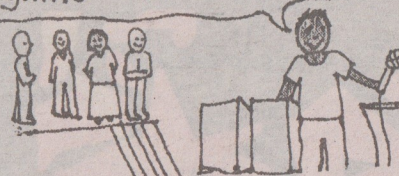
In Egypt, 300,000 people occupied Tahrir Square for 18 days in January and February, 2011, and the joy and revolutionary energy was felt worldwide. Egypt was the image Adbusters evoked when they ran the notice last February that is credited with sparking the movement here.

But what has evolved here is actually much more like the movement in Spain, where in May people set up camp in plazas across the country that brought thousands of people of all ages and backgrounds out into the street to participate in marches and general assemblies. There, like here, the movement was started by a slick, media savvy, radical but liberal protest group, and there, like here, the fundamentals of anarchism were embraced, such as consensus and horizontal decision

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GENERAL ASSEMBLY!
gather 'round everyone



brutally crushed that they are ground out of our consciousness, and our arrogance born from ignorance that we can replicate the worldwide protests without absorbing the lessons they have had to learn. Visit Counterpunch.org to read his reflections. Needless to say, we know many Europeans view us as rootless and arrogant, but we are not going to let it get us down, and certainly he is right that we need to spread our wings to embrace the solidarity of the worldwide movements and learn all we can from them.

A warning that bears repeating about the overly simplistic analysis embodied by the rhetoric of "the 99%" is how, in times of economic hardship, appeals to populism have lead to fascism in Europe. It could happen here if certain interests latch on to the linkage of nationalism and radicalism.

What I find most hopeful in Spain are accounts of the neighborhood assemblies, which are as diverse politically as the movement itself, but some of which have come to embrace anticapitalist goals and are committed to disrupting the plan to dismantle our communities in the name of economic policy. The neighborhood assemblies often meet in public in the center of everything, drawing in bystanders, blocking traffic, and generally making their presence known. They discuss tactics, such as occupying a hospital slated for closure, but they also plan participation in larger marches and actions the way an affinity group would. The participation of regular neighborhood people gives the police pause, and the rootedness to place provides people from diverse backgrounds with diverse common cause.

Here in Oakland, a few neighborhood groups are popping up, organized or inspired by people from the occupy camps. Hopefully, you will read this and be inspired to talk to your neighbors and friends about meeting to discuss your revolutionary goals out in public, working on this learning curve we are all struggling with, and forming strong bonds that will enable us to work through the stuff that could bog us down.

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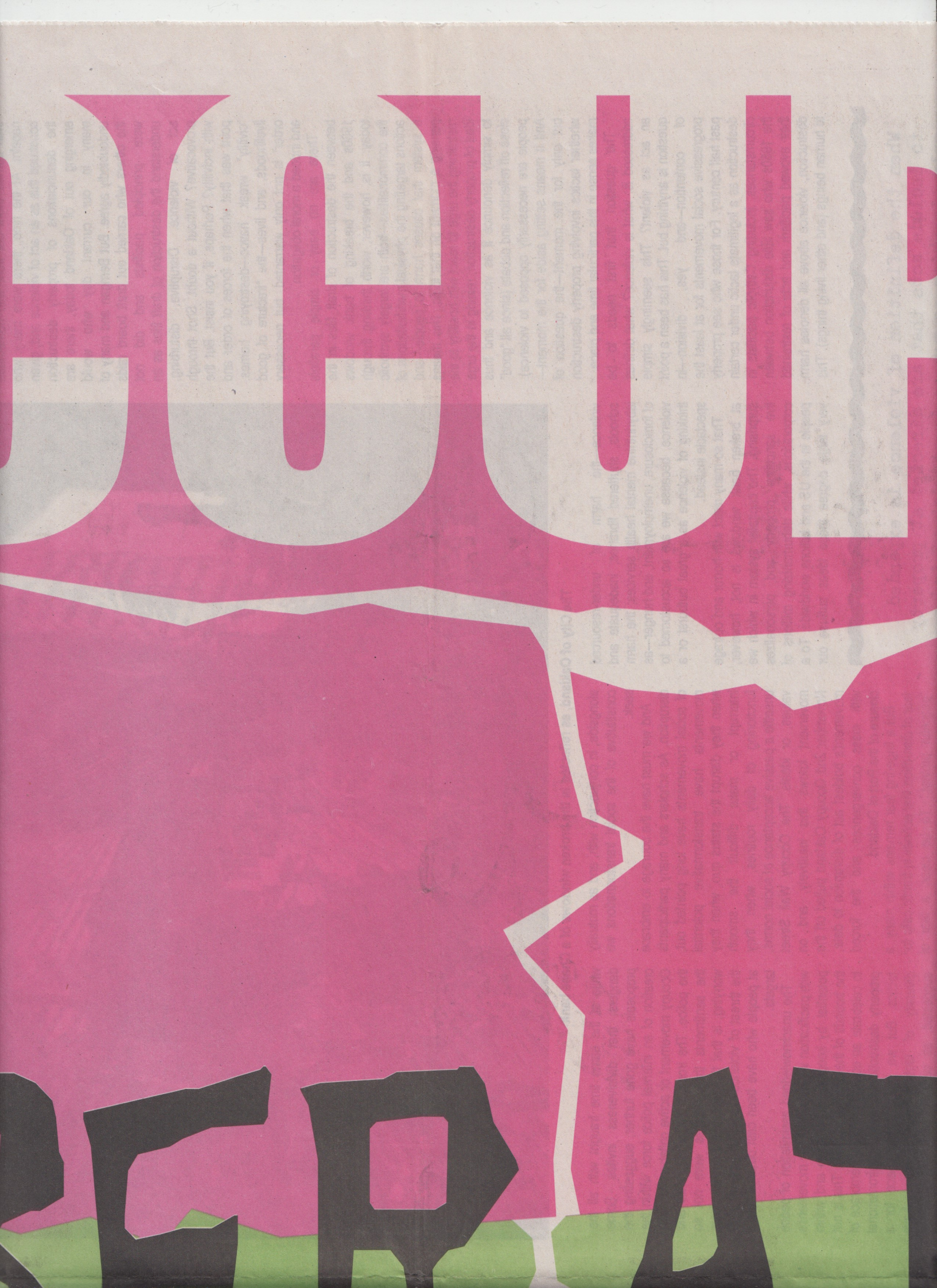


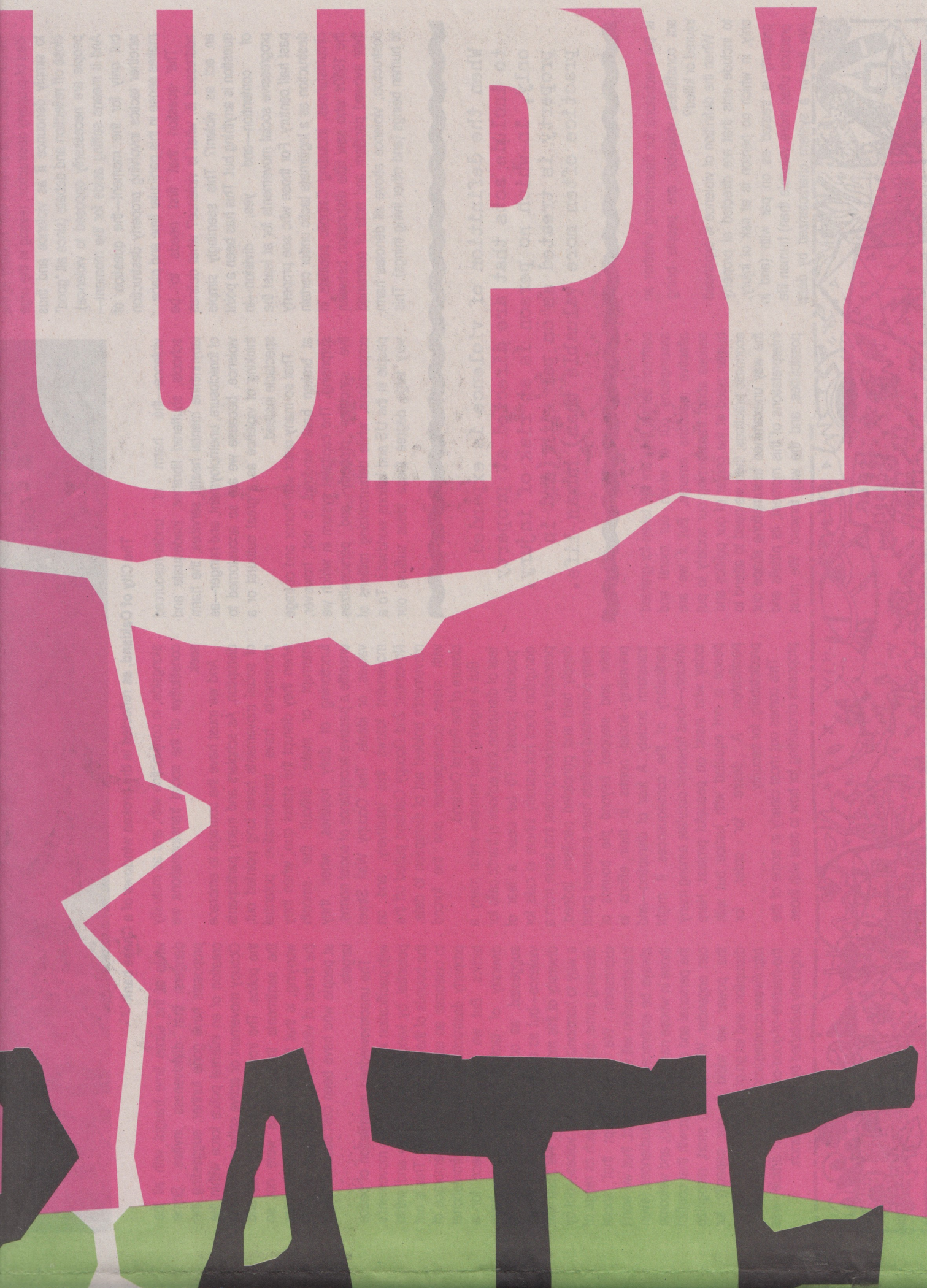




THE

PROTEST





the FRACTURE of GOOD ORDER on "Violence" at OCCUPY demonstrations

By Emily Brissette

"Our apologies, good friends, for the fracture of good order, the burning of paper instead of children...."

These were Father Daniel Berrigan's words when he was on trial in 1969 for a draft board raid in Catonsville, Maryland. He and eight others had entered the draft board office during business hours, removed draft files (against some resistance from the staff) and then burned them out front with homemade napalm. At the time, there were many who construed this as an act of violence and, given the denunciations of property destruction emerging out of Oakland today, there are many in our current day who would undoubtedly agree. But Berrigan and many of the others who carried out draft board raids were principled pacifists and did not understand the destruction of draft files as an act of violence. Disruptive, disturbing, provocative? Without a doubt. Shot through with incivility? Perhaps, if you insist. But the point was that when the forces of order and "civility" wreak havoc—destroying homes, livelihoods, and lives—the "fracture of good order" is not only warranted, but necessary and indeed a moral obligation.

There are no easy or simple parallels between the destruction of draft files in the 1960s and the breaking of bank windows today. It is, however, worth thinking through the commonalities—both are largely symbolic

stratification and inequality. In this context in which some human lives are accorded very little worth, to treat property destruction as a form of violence minimizes the daily experience of real violence—harm to human beings—in many communities. It also makes it hard to see systemic, structural forms of

deny the existing system the power to define the situation for us. We must root out the ways it shapes our interpretations and reactions, by thinking deeply, probing our assumptions, questioning the origins of our gut reactions and the allegiances these express. We must have the courage to pursue personal transformation

who engage in property destruction. Discursively expelling the "black-clad anarchists" from the fold of the 99%, either by insisting that they are another 1% who usurp or destroy the good of the many or by irresponsibly painting all as agents provocateurs, is perhaps the most benign—



on "Violence at OCCUPY demonstrations"

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These were Father Daniel Berrigan's words when he was on trial in 1969 for a draft board raid in Catonsville, Maryland. He and eight others had entered the draft board office during business hours, removed draft files (against some resistance from the staff) and then burned them out front with homemade napalm. At the time, there were many who construed this as an act of violence and, given the denunciations of property destruction emerging out of Oakland today, there are many in our current day who would undoubtedly agree. But Berrigan and many of the others who carried out draft board raids were principled pacifists and did not understand the destruction of draft files as an act of violence. Disruptive, disturbing, provocative? Without a doubt. Shot through with incivility? Perhaps, if you insist. But the point was that when the forces of order and "civility" wreak havoc—destroying homes, livelihoods, and lives—the "fracture of good order" is not only warranted, but necessary and indeed a moral obligation.

There are no easy or simple parallels between the destruction of draft files in the 1960s and the breaking of bank windows today. It is, however, worth thinking through the commonalities—both are largely symbolic actions targeting the physical manifestations of a system that causes harm to people—and pausing a moment on that logic. This means restraining the urge to react with hostility to the idea of property destruction, reining in the urge to simply denounce it as violence and thus close off reflection and debate (since all "good" people are necessarily opposed to violence). And it means setting aside for the moment—but only for the moment—the question of whether tactics involving property destruction makes sense in this particular time and place.

The question that first needs to be addressed is: what is violence? what defines an act as violent? This seemingly simple question is anything but. This has been a point

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The City of Oakland, as reflected in the broken windows of a Chase bank

violence—the harm of under-resourced schools, shuttered libraries, inadequate and labyrinthine mental health services; the harm of foreclosure, unemployment, and hunger—as violence, because we are so accustomed to

alongside, in conjunction with, and as mutually constitutive of the social transformations we seek.

And we must have the courage to embrace disruption. As scholars and many participants

while at the same time fraught with all the dangers that divisiveness invites. Some proposals have gone further, suggesting the creation of an internal police force within the Occupy movement or active collaboration with

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The question that first needs to be addressed is: what is violence? what defines an act as violent? This seemingly simple question is anything but. This has been a point of contention—and yes, division—in progressive social movements for at least the past half century. For those who see property destruction as a legitimate tactic under certain circumstances, including Catholic pacifists in the 1960s who saw little disjunction between their avowed pacifism and acts of restrained destruction, violence above all denotes harm to human beings (and other living things). This



The City of Oakland, as reflected in the broken windows of a Chase bank

violence—the harm of under-resourced schools, shuttered libraries, inadequate and labyrinthine mental health services; the harm of foreclosure, unemployment, and hunger—as violence, because we are so accustomed to thinking of violence as a great outburst or a spectacle instead.

That so many react with horror and outrage at broken bank windows is not, however, surprising. The capitalist system in which we live sanctifies property and personalizes corporations, while dehumanizing millions of people in the US and billions worldwide. To a very large degree these ideas suffuse our

alongside, in conjunction with, and as mutually constitutive of the social transformations we seek.

And we must have the courage to embrace disruption. As scholars and many participants of social movements have long pointed out, movements have transformative potential when they disrupt the status quo, when they interrupt or make difficult the smooth functioning of daily routines, when they unsettle a passive acceptance of social norms, values, or ideals. The Occupy Wall Street movement knows this intuitively, and on November 2nd Occupy Oakland pulled off the movement's boldest act of disruption to date, with mass convergences and the forced closure of the Port of Oakland.

But a lingering fear remains within many, a fear of disruption that echoes in frantic calls for "peaceful protest." To be clear: a fear of disruption does not usually inhere in calls for peaceful or nonviolent protest that issue from a deeply held and principled pacifism. Indeed, many committed pacifists have assumed great risks and stepped beyond the bounds of prevailing social norms in their efforts to transform society. A fear of disruption—and particularly of the consequences it might unleash—does however circulate among many today who insist on peaceful protest. Here peace is not equated with justice but with pacification. A desire for order, for predictability, for security.

This comes out most clearly in some of the proposals circulating for how to deal with those

while at the same time fraught with all the dangers that divisiveness invites. Some proposals have gone further, suggesting the creation of an internal police force within the Occupy movement or active collaboration with the police. The irony, if these proposals and the sentiments they express were not so worrying, is that this vigilantism itself harbors the threat of violence—real violence, directed at people who have been cast out and made targets.

The unacknowledged assimilation of peace with pacification will only fetter the movement's potential, by keeping us bound to and within the bounds of the dictates of order. This is not to celebrate an equally unthinking embrace of property destruction or overly confrontational tactics. But we must create space for a diversity of tactics—not, as some have suggested, as code for the legitimization of violence—but as a necessary corollary to the diversity of this movement itself. We must find a way to harmonize our myriad voices—not by silencing some, but by giving each its range of expression. We must accept that social transformation will entail conflict, that we won't always be embraced by our audiences (even those in whose name we speak), and welcome the personal and collective growth that conflict can engender. We must, in short, recognize the power we wield in our capacity for disruption, and let go of our fear.

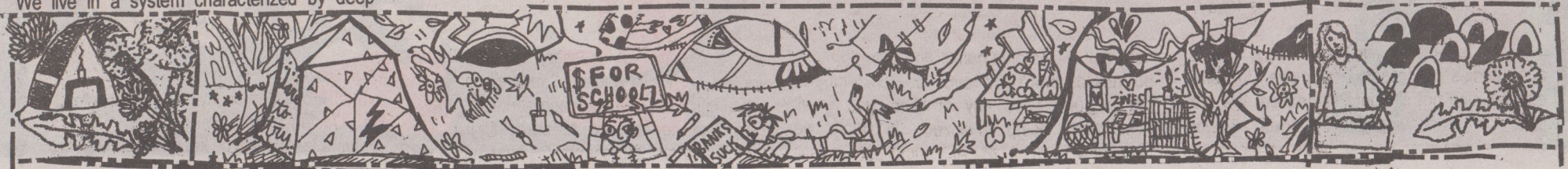
<http://www.counterpunch.org/2011/11/04/for-the-fracture-of-good-order/> This article was originally published by counterpunch.

When the definition of violence is expanded to include acts that are directed at property only, in which no person is at risk of injury, property is treated as on par with (and in practice often more valuable than) human life.

is the touchstone for determining whether an act constitutes violence: are people being injured or killed?

When the definition of violence is expanded to include acts that are directed at property only, in which no person is at risk of injury, property is treated as on par with (and in practice often more valuable than) human life. We live in a system characterized by deep

common sense; they are the taken-for-granted assumptions out of which our moral and affective reactions emerge. But if we are serious about transforming our society to put human need at the center of our politics and economic practices, then we need to attend to the way unexamined assumptions shape our interpretations of this moment, its pitfalls and possibilities, and the way forward. We must



GRABBING DEFEAT from the JAWS of VICTORY

SOLIDARITY ≠ BEING UNCRITICAL

By Jesse D. Palmer

The state and capitalism are the greatest purveyors of violence, i.e. killing people and using force rather than discussion to obtain goals. To the contrary, anarchists are working to build a world based on consent and voluntary cooperation, rather than coercion, arbitrary authority and violence. It is therefore ironic that when a handful of people broke a few windows early on November 3 after the 10,000-strong November 2 general strike in Oakland, mainstream discussion concentrated on blaming anarchists for violence and sought to make the term "anarchist" synonymous with "violent."

Some people claimed that anarchists had tried to "take over" Occupy Oakland and the general strike, when in fact the foundation of the occupy movement rests on anarchist principals such as horizontal decision making, mutual aid and participatory democracy. It's not an exaggeration to say that anarchists organized and founded Occupy Oakland.

Anarchists are not, however, a homogenous group with a single party-line. Many of us felt that the unfocused property damage late at night after most people involved in the general strike had left was a tactical blunder — grabbing defeat from the jaws of victory. Just because property destruction is not violence against human beings and pales in comparison to the violence of the state does not mean that breaking windows of local businesses, needlessly burning barricades, and trashing the streets around the occupation with spray paint was a good idea. You do not

have to engage in or support inappropriate tactics in a particular situation to prove that you have a right of self-defense, that the state is

rhetorical points. It didn't seem like either side honestly felt they could convince the other side or particularly cared — but neither side could

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more violent than activists, or that property-destruction tactics might be appropriate at certain points.

The most militant street tactic is not always "better" or more radical. Street tactics aren't just photo-ops to dress in black and look cool. Street tactics can help shine light on social contradictions, build movement or serve other purposes. Militant tactics that appear random shrink the movement and alienate people who could otherwise be radicalized and join.

One of the worst results of the November 3 middle of the night fire and smashing was how it trapped most of us in endless and ritualized debates over property destruction vs non-violence which crowded out almost all other discussion for a couple of weeks after the general strike. At a time when we urgently needed to be figuring out what the movement should do next, what new tactics we could adopt, and what new targets we could tackle, people on both sides of the debate recited

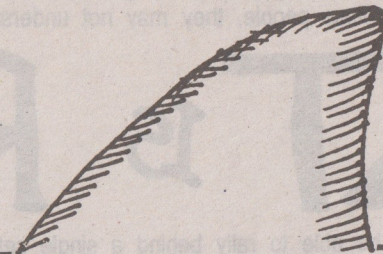
let go, either. The stalemate just went on and on — and continues still.

The late night fire on November 3 eclipsed everything else that happened on November 2. In particular, at 11 pm that night, people seized a vacant building a block from the occupation — a logical and timely extension of the occupy movement. Had the building occupation not been followed by lighting barricades on fire and trashing the area, there might have been exciting dialogue about the building seizure — even if it got busted by the police. The media

and politicians would have criticized the seizure of private property, but such seizure would be easy for most people to understand, easy to defend, and thought-provoking.

After November 3, some people argued that lighting the barricades on fire was a justified act of self-defense after police began gathering to raid the occupied building, or that it was just an attempt to blow away tear gas that had not yet been fired. This makes no sense — if anything, the burning barricades made police action more likely. Are those who lit the barricades seriously arguing that they could militarily win an engagement with a couple of hundred armed police, when they were unarmed? If so, why didn't setting the barricades on fire protect the building occupation? If the police were able to take back the occupied building whether or not we built barricades, why build them?

It is dangerous to be tone deaf as to how actions may be perceived and dismiss anyone critical of a particular action as a stupid liberal. The concept of solidarity between radicals is important — we need to stand together when attacked. But it isn't helpful solidarity to unquestioningly support militant tactics that go awry. Treating these questions like academic debates where we try to advocate purely ideological points misses the point. Actions have consequences. We should focus on radicalizing ever expanding numbers of people. Tactical mistakes that isolate us take us in the wrong direction.



WE LAUGH AT THE WAVES

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WE LAUGH AT THE WAVES

THOUGHTS ON THE ANTI-CAPITALIST MARCH IN OAKLAND

By COMMUNISMKNOWSNOMONSTERS

Things need to be said about the general strike in Oakland [on November 2nd]. There are things that need to be addressed and positions to be clarified. This is not a justification of some of the actions that happened during the general strike because these things need no justification. But because people are so keen on having an opinion on everything, we would prefer that when they say shit, they are accurate. This is also a love letter and a note of encouragement to the people on our team.

One of the most exciting actions to come out of the general strike was the anti-capitalist march. Of course, the shutdowns of banks and work places that were threatening their workers was amazing, but there seems to be little strife around these things, and therefore little to say beyond "Fuck yes, shut everything down." But as the anti-capitalist march was one of the more confrontational (and therefore controversial) actions, there are plenty of things to say.

First things first, we were not direct

combination of basic infrastructure/solidarity and a large mass of bodies that, together, provide a platform for offensive and creative attacks on capital. The anti-capitalism march was a test run of this. Here we want to make clear that we do not believe that breaking windows and spray painting walls will materially hasten the revolution. We don't think any pro-revolutionary believes this. But what is important is that pro-revolutionaries are

business.), the only violence directed toward actual human beings was on the part of the "peaceful protestors." We notice here that the projected goal of pacifism, a peaceful world, is not possible through pacifism. We also notice a definite difference between non-violence and pacifism: the former being a specific tactic individuals might choose to employ; the latter being an ideology forced onto other people. It is here that we see the very same logic of the

can be nothing and everything all at once strikes more fear into the citizen's heart than the police with their guns and grenades and tear gas and cages. The label "the anarchists" is thrown onto everybody who does not protest the proper way or who wears all black. This is not because of the actual political content of the rowdy hooligans, clearly. There is no thought whatsoever when this label is thrown about in such a manner. It is entirely an attempt by those who have completely internalized their alienation and the logic of this world to bring these outsiders back into the discourse of Empire, although clearly in a negative way.

All of this only further proves the existence of world civil war, and that Occupy Oakland is a battlefield. The divisions created by this march are not political in the traditional sense. It is not one tendency against each other. This is quite plainly a battle between ethical forms-of-life, meaning these conflicts are over the way people do the things they do. This is most evident in the fact that on both sides of this are

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TO THE MEDIA. THE ULTIMATE

Things need to be said about the general strike in Oakland [on November 2nd]. There are things that need to be addressed and positions to be clarified. This is not a justification of some of the actions that happened during the general strike because these things need no justification. But because people are so keen on having an opinion on everything, we would prefer that when they say shit, they are accurate. This is also a love letter and a note of encouragement to the people on our team.

One of the most exciting actions to come out of the general strike was the anti-capitalist march. Of course, the shutdowns of banks and work places that were threatening their workers was amazing, but there seems to be little strife around these things, and therefore little to say beyond "Fuck yes, shut everything down." But as the anti-capitalist march was one of the more confrontational (and therefore controversial) actions, there are plenty of things to say.

First things first, we were not direct participants in all of it, but we fucking love property damage. This is a very non-political (in the classical sense of the word) love and really we just love to see shit fucked up. Fuck normalcy. Besides the wanton vandalism, this march was exciting because it was a large group of people acting completely outside of and against the general political sentiment of what has so far been the occupation movement. This does not mean, of course, that it was against the occupation itself because the very non-hierarchical and overarching nature of the occupation allows for these sorts of things to happen within it. That liberals want to say otherwise says more of their own ideological naiveté and blindness.

This was also the radical wing of the occupation flexing its muscle. And it is always the radical elements of these sorts of movements that provide the energy, space, and bodies necessary to move forward, expand, and not sink into stagnation. We are situated in an ongoing global civil war, and, for the first time in a long while, there is a

combination of basic infrastructure/solidarity and a large mass of bodies that, together, provide a platform for offensive and creative attacks on capital. The anti-capitalism march was a test run of this. Here we want to make clear that we do not believe that breaking windows and spray painting walls will materially hasten the revolution. We don't think any pro-revolutionary believes this. But what is important is that pro-revolutionaries are

business.), the only violence directed toward actual human beings was on the part of the "peaceful protestors." We notice here that the projected goal of pacifism, a peaceful world, is not possible through pacifism. We also notice a definite difference between non-violence and pacifism: the former being a specific tactic individuals might choose to employ; the latter being an ideology forced onto other people. It is here that we see the very same logic of the

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learning how to fight, and, beyond that, being able to momentarily break out of the suffocating pressure of society.

What we found comical about this whole event was that the liberal pacifists themselves destroyed the myth of ideological pacifism, although from their position they are not able to see this. In the process of smashing bank windows, there were a couple protestors that took more hardline stances on pacifism, with a couple individuals going as far as grabbing, hitting, and tackling the people smashing windows. There was also talk from some of the "peaceful protestors" of forcefully removing people's masks. Of course the sweet sweet irony in all of this is that while property was being destroyed (and it should be made clear here that it was only banks and union busting businesses that got destroyed – not that we, the authors, have any problem with small businesses being attacked. In fact, we absolutely love it as ALL business is still

state and the police embodied in actual bodies. That peace has to be forced upon other people, regardless of how this happens. It should bring you joy then to hear that the peace police were beaten Greece style with wooden dowels and poles.

So it becomes obvious that it is not violence that is the issue, as the peaceful protestors are quick to use violence themselves. No, the issue is of intensity. Of image. The "peaceful protestors" wish for the occupation movement to be nice and soft, attractive to the media, the ultimate source of parasitism and representation. So when an amorphous mass of bodies that are not identifiable comes crashing with all of its chaos and intensity through the city, the first immediate reaction is to use any means necessary to attenuate the intensity of those bodies. Simultaneously, the unidentifiable and unrepresentable mass needs to be reduced to something that is identifiable and representable. That something

can be nothing and everything all at once strikes more fear into the citizen's heart than the police with their guns and grenades and tear gas and cages. The label "the anarchists" is thrown onto everybody who does not protest the proper way or who wears all black. This is not because of the actual political content of the rowdy hooligans, clearly. There is no thought whatsoever when this label is thrown about in such a manner. It is entirely an attempt by those who have completely internalized their alienation and the logic of this world to bring these outsiders back into the discourse of Empire, although clearly in a negative way.

All of this only further proves the existence of world civil war, and that Occupy Oakland is a battlefield. The divisions created by this march are not political in the traditional sense. It is not one tendency against each other. This is quite plainly a battle between ethical forms-of-life, meaning these conflicts are over the way people do the things they do. This is most evident in the fact that on both sides of this are anarchists and communists. And this is where it gets interesting: those anarchists and communists who were not for the property damage could be later seen telling those who were to "calm down." It doesn't matter that all anarchists are against the state and capitalism when there are those who are firmly attached to the life dampening nature of society itself.

None of the authors of this were present for the attempted building occupation later in the night. We do know however that it was not a violent action until the police showed up. That people were prepared for this does not place the blame on them but only shows their accurate understanding of the function of the police. We also know that the GA voted to endorse and support all occupations of buildings, so those that are saying this was not done with the consent of the occupation can shut up and stew in the short comings and failures of consensus and democracy. Losers.

Mad props and so much fucking love to all the Oakland hooligans who have been, continue to, and will be keepin' it real.

COMMUNITY & WORKING on OURSELVES

Continued from Page 1

cannot create a utopia, a safe space, a zone free of all oppression and confrontation.

There will be violence. There will be arguments. There will be theft. There will be abuse. These things exist within all of that which we exist within: patriarchy, class struggle, gentrification, racial tension, queer- and transphobia, misogyny, dishonesty, greed, and on and on. This is the system we all live in, we were all brought up in, we all know. All we know. Welcome to the real world, in which we are poisoned every day. We can take the time to care for ourselves but we will always be interrupted by more damage, more abuse. The occupy movement does not claim to be a network of tent city islands unaffected by this real world.

The homeless are not the problem, the homeless are our family. The problem is lack of jobs and options for those who cannot work, privatized and inflated education, gentrification, and a plethora of other things which aid in one's becoming homeless. The problem is also the media's installation of fear and detestation of the homeless into the minds of those who have not experienced this lifestyle. The violence is not the problem. The problem is the idea implanted in the minds of young kids that they must fight to survive, living in a violent state, a desensitization to violence as

seen in movies and on TV—including the news broadcasts. We are all products of a sick system. How dare this very system criticize us for not being less affected?

In the 1980s, the CIA introduced crack cocaine into low income communities of color. At the same time, a large number of psychiatric hospitals were closed and the ex-patients scarcely had alternatives to the streets. For decades, community members have been losing their housing due to the development of posh studios and condos appealing in aesthetic and available in price only to more wealthy, more white, transplants from other parts of town or other towns altogether. Recently we have seen this phenomenon reach a new level with the housing collapse, bank bailouts and foreclosures. These are the kind of things the Occupy Wall Street movement may be speaking out and camping out against.

People who are products of generations of legislation and city planning like this have already been occupying cities everywhere. Perhaps creating a space for people to exist together, laying their struggles out right in front of city hall to dry from the rain, is a good way to make the city face the problems like homelessness, illness and hunger that they ignore every day. Since city officials are not homeless people, they may not understand

this like others do. They hand out eviction notices along with vouchers for and information about a local shelter, which will not open for another three days (many shelters in the bay area are only open during the more rainy months), and which requires a rent payment (How long are those vouchers good for? Long enough for the city to forget?) They may even think they are doing good. (Have you ever heard of the city reaching out to folks being kicked out of their homes like this?)



The corporate media, city officials, and internet commentators have done their best to point out how crazy and out of control those involved with the occupations are. Reports of urinating in public! People gotta piss. Reports of dogs biting reporters! Hey, we said we did not welcome the mainstream news. Reports of drug usage! Just because it's out in the open doesn't mean it is unique. There was

even a person murdered outside of the Occupy Oakland encampment, as well as a suicide in Burlington, VT and another death in Salt Lake City, UT. These are tragic occurrences, but do not stand solely in the occupy movement. People die, people are murdered every day. This is not a problem with the occupations.

I am unsure whether I have a place writing about the things I'm writing about. I am just some white lady, but I feel it is urgent to have these dialogues. The occupy movement brings people from so many different backgrounds and paths together and few of us share the same story. I have been homeless and I have been unemployed and I have never experienced wealth, but I will never fully understand the feelings and experiences behind the racial tension present in our communities. I feel like even this racial tension is a product of the system and a tool to render us powerless, pitted against each other before a common enemy.

Is it wrong to believe the state is smart enough to put white cops in black neighborhoods and vice versa? Smart enough to portray young black men as criminal-aged violent gangbangers and young white men as college-aged upcoming entrepreneurs? Things like this can frustrate and paralyze, but communication is a beautiful thing so I may as well try my best. I believe that is all we can do.

WHAT IS REALISTIC?

Continued from Page 1

reforms and charismatic leaders is the only realistic strategy for success.

I disagree with this analysis. The danger of making specific political demands is the

will be able to rally behind a single set of demands that is remotely powerful or interesting, does not. I am not particularly interested in finding ways to make small reforms in the systems that oppress us. I

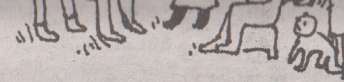
then what is useful is having ways to assess risk and make informed decisions in specific situations without compromising them. This involves being honest about our emotional and intellectual reactions to the world regardless of

that prohibits commerce is not the same as a space outside of capitalism. A day when the police don't show up is not the same as a world without police. The feeling of creative powerlessness and possibility that has been

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reforms and charismatic leaders is the only realistic strategy for success.

I disagree with this analysis. The danger of making specific political demands is the danger of taking the energy of the moment and bending it to the service of something too small. The reason that the Occupy/Decolonize demonstrations have felt powerful to me is *because* they are leaderless and *because* they have not been interested in making specific demands. What is being rejected around the world is not just a tax system but the tenets of global capitalism itself and the particular brand of representative democracy that has helped it to become ascendant; not one incident of

will be able to rally behind a single set of demands that is remotely powerful or interesting, does not. I am not particularly interested in finding ways to make small reforms in the systems that oppress us. I would rather use my energy to nurture communities that reject reformism and aren't easily co-opted by established systems of power. For me, this means being honest about the facts on the ground and choosing tactics that allow me to keep space open where people can act on and articulate desires that are not easily absorbed by conventional political narratives.

Daring to frame the conversation in these

then what is useful is having ways to assess risk and make informed decisions in specific situations without compromising them. This involves being honest about our emotional and intellectual reactions to the world regardless of whether or not they conform to the dominant social order or the opinions of our peers.

that prohibits commerce is not the same as a space outside of capitalism. A day when the police don't show up is not the same as a world without police. The feeling of creative newness and possibility that has been experienced at various occupations should not be confused with the world we want. Confusing

To think that an entrenched system can be brought to its knees quickly is totally realistic

What are we doing here?

To think that an entrenched system can be brought to its knees quickly is totally realistic; the historical record is filled with moments of collapse. To assume that people who have been raised in and broken by that system are going to be able to turn on a dime and create better, more interesting alternatives without working through their shit and learning how to set boundaries and understand one another is not. Many people have been unbalanced and made crazy by this system regardless of income bracket.

Insisting that these camps are a demonstration of how we would like the world to function is beautifully poetic, but it does not take into account the fact that we have been cast into systems which are destructive and predatory. A city park in a capitalist police state is not liberated because it is occupied by people who desire liberation. A demonstration

these things only sets folks up to burn out when they realize that utopia is not around the corner and learn how flawed even the communities planned and built with the best of intentions can be.

Being realistic about this situation means having realistic expectations of the work we would need to do to transform ourselves and each other into communities that are beautiful, strong, and allowed to thrive. This particular moment is part of a larger process that we cannot predict, let alone direct. A forest is more than a collection of trees; it is an interconnected ecosystem that will arise when the conditions are right. You cannot plant a field of forest, or design one with a city planner; all you can do is encourage new growth and try to protect it from toxic elements. Life arises abundant but we should not be confused about the nature of these glorious weeds, even as we celebrate their potential.

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Believing that the vast majority of people in our society are dissatisfied with the world that capitalism and state power has created is realistic to me but thinking that these people

terms is far more energizing than borrowing the limited language those in power have given us to express ourselves. In this context creating more spaces where power is decentralized and people are able to act autonomously is a worthwhile political end in itself. If our desires are grand and beautiful,

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SOLIDARITY ^{NOT} UNITY

division, consensus and the Outside

by Evan Buswell

The General Strike and "Violence"

I experienced the general strike in Oakland on Nov. 2 as an overwhelming success. The port was successfully shut down for the night, by some accounts by up to 100,000 people, and certainly well into the tens of thousands. It was celebratory, and beautiful.

After checking the usual internet sources the next morning, however, it became apparent that's not the spin it got. Two other events were instead highlighted. First, there was some property destruction at various points (i.e. broken windows). Second, there was an attempted occupation of a vacant building at 520 16th street, to set up a free school and library. The response to this latter event is, unfortunately, becoming less surprising in Oakland: batons, rubber bullets, flashbangs, tear gas, and a seriously injured veteran. For several days afterwards much of the movement was preoccupied with this story, about whether those who acted autonomously and were branded by the news media were harmful to the movement, and about what tactics should be endorsed and prohibited.

The Orchestrated Split with "Violent" Anarchists

This is a story that has been building for thirteen years. Shortly after the 1999 WTO protests, the media spin quickly became about the "peaceful" activists vs. the "violent" activists, with the latter universally characterized as anarchists, members of a shadowy "black bloc" organization that was hell bent on ruining an otherwise perfectly upstanding protest. Immediately the narrative of much of the left became about the harm

but they are discussions we have to have *within* the movement, not between the people who suppose they are part of the movement and the others who have been marginalized.

The Consensus Model as Enforced Unity

With the overwhelming success of the GA (general assembly) model, the tenor of this discussion is changing. Now, rather than just exasperation that "the black bloc" doesn't "represent the movement," we get on the one hand a legitimate feeling of disenfranchisement when supposedly autonomous actions occur, and on the other

Now, the situation is completely different. Our goals and tactics go far beyond a specific time-based objective, but more importantly, we have gained the task of organizing *space*, rather than just *people*.

Consensus and the Outside

If my experience at the occupation at Davis is any indication of a larger trend, and rumors as well as internet chatter indicate that it is, this is probably the biggest issue within the movement. Firstly, it is difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish between so-called "autonomous" and group actions. Our camp

and nevertheless in relationship to that which it hopes to change. As a consciousness of reality, the outside should be preserved, because it's there. But in our directions and our goals, we must constantly work to get rid of that outside. We need to begin practically defining mechanisms for enforcing some minimum of discipline without expelling the undisciplined to the mercy of the state.

In order to do this, we have to know what discipline is. And this means that we need to begin critically remapping the relationship between autonomy and collectivity. We must learn to see our freedom in collectivity. This may have been theoretically achieved many times, but *practically*, autonomy and collectivity are still in conflict, and that conflict extends to the rest of the movement.

Consensus and Social Care

The value of consensus is proven by the fact that its shortcomings have become clear: our expectations have been raised by our experiences of its immensely democratic power. Representation, which is mostly just a system to legitimize exclusion from the political process, is being actively replaced with participation. When the consensus process is focused on participation and discussion, then, it is extremely effective at being inclusive. No one can be prevented from speaking. But the "unanimous" decisions within consensus are fetishized as if they provided a complete social order, when in reality they provide only a few punctuated moments in a complex cooperative activity. The small part of our sociality that is actually formalized stands in for our sociality as a whole.

"Consensus" has always been metonymic



hand suggestions that we should organize a group to prevent the "violence," or that we should issue a formal statement, "as a movement," that any tactic like this is not part of The Occupy Movement. These "peace" vs.

changes form constantly, changes are made that people disagree with, and people start feeling like they're losing their hold on the movement. Secondly, when we are confronted with aggression or harassment that is

was celebratory, and beautiful. After checking the usual internet sources the next morning, however, it became apparent that's not the spin it got. Two other events were instead highlighted. First, there was some property destruction at various points (i.e. broken windows). Second, there was an attempted occupation of a vacant building at 520 16th street, to set up a free school and library. The response to this latter event is, unfortunately, becoming less surprising in Oakland: batons, rubber bullets, flashbangs, tear gas, and a seriously injured veteran. For several days afterwards much of the movement was preoccupied with this story, about whether those who acted autonomously and were branded by the news media were harmful to the movement, and about what tactics should be endorsed and prohibited.

The Orchestrated Split with "Violent" Anarchists

This is a story that has been building for thirteen years. Shortly after the 1999 WTO protests, the media spin quickly became about the "peaceful" activists vs. the "violent" activists, with the latter universally characterized as anarchists, members of a shadowy "black bloc" organization that was hell bent on ruining an otherwise perfectly upstanding protest. Immediately the narrative of much of the left became about the harm these violent outsiders wrought on the "message" of the protest, they way they were "hijacking" or "co-opting" the movement. I remember that many of my friends, after returning from the WTO protest, were completely confused as to the way "the black bloc" had become stigmatized. Their experience of black bloc tactics was mostly that when the police started to escalate, the black bloc came in through the tear gas (many had gas masks) and offered medical assistance, got people to safe places, and reinforced the human blockades everyone was setting up throughout the city. The "peace" vs. "violence" story that we hear now is a deliberate distortion of reality.

As always, we must be open to seriously questioning the efficacy and desirability of certain tactics. But regardless of what we think about particular tactics, the division of the

discussion is changing. Now, rather than just exasperation that "the black bloc" doesn't "represent the movement," we get on the one hand a legitimate feeling of disenfranchisement when supposedly autonomous actions occur, and on the other



hand suggestions that we should organize a group to prevent the "violence," or that we should issue a formal statement, "as a movement," that any tactic like this is not part of The Occupy Movement. These "peace" vs. "violence" debates illuminate unresolved issues that are at the very core of our movement: policing, representation, enfranchisement, and the relationship between autonomy and collectivity. The consensus process has been our answer to all of these for a while, but if its overwhelming success has made clear its potentials, it has also revealed its shortcomings.

Just as we should be wary of narratives of division within the movement, we should be equally wary about stories of unity. These are really just two ways of looking at the same thing: the creation of an artificially unified mainstream and a disenfranchised outside. Our rallying cry should be solidarity, not unity; our physical togetherness, not our behavioral similarity. What has become clear from the application of consensus to occupations and general assemblies is that, in fact, consensus

is any indication of a larger trend, and rumors as well as internet chatter indicate that it is, this is probably the biggest issue within the movement. Firstly, it is difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish between so-called "autonomous" and group actions. Our camp

changes form constantly, changes are made that people disagree with, and people start feeling like they're losing their hold on the movement. Secondly, when we are confronted with aggression or harassment that is threatening to our camp, we often have to deal with it on the spot, without recourse to a GA. All disciplinary action is the same: exile. In a way, consensus ideology implies a Lockean paradise: you freely choose to belong to a society, and if you don't like it you leave. Consensus depends on the fiction of an "outside" in two respects: first, that each individual has the capacity to act autonomously *outside* the group, apart from the group, not affecting the group as a whole; second, that disunited elements can be merely ejected back into the already-existing society. This fictional outside is now being confronted for the fiction that it always was.

Consensus has essentially nothing to say about what takes place outside of GAs. It assumes that discipline will never be necessary. It assumes that nobody needs to have a say if they can't be physically present. And what is most important, it assumes that the space outside of the GA can be a space of

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"Consensus" has always been metonymic (that is, a part standing for a whole) for a whole range of social behaviors, only a few of which are actually present in the formal consensus process. But the effect of consensus-as-metonymy is to obscure those social behaviors which have yet to be formally encoded into the consensus process. Rather than an ultimately doomed race to encode more and more of our social practice into highly systematized political structures—this race is an integral part of what we are trying to escape—we have to start giving equal priority to those things which happen *outside* of these structures, outside of consensus. That which is outside our formal processes must be actively included in our sociality. This will require care, and work, and may eventually react back on the formal processes. Rather than fetishizing these processes as the bearers of social good, rather than imagining that they could provide the basis for social care, we have to recognize them as only one small part of our sociality. all

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Consensus has essentially nothing to say about what takes place outside of GAs. It assumes that discipline will never be necessary. It assumes that nobody needs to have a say if they can't be physically present. And what is most important, it assumes that the space outside of the GA can be a space of complete autonomy without conflict. What the occupations are making clear is that some sort of discipline is necessary, many people want to find a way to be involved but cannot yet come to every GA, and the profound togetherness we experience within the GA does not magically become isolated autonomy as soon as we step outside of it.

As much as we had hoped otherwise, consensus is not a miniature, liberated future developing independently of the state. Consensus is totally dependent on the presence of a larger state to which it can eject elements that its process has no other means to discipline. That's not necessarily a bad thing. There is, actually, a world outside of the movement, and until the movement becomes the dominant force in the world, it must exist in relation to that world. That is, it must exist dialectically: the movement must be apart from

are actually present in the formal consensus process. But the effect of consensus-as-metonymy is to obscure those social behaviors which have yet to be formally encoded into the consensus process. Rather than an ultimately doomed race to encode more and more of our social practice into highly systematized political structures—this race is an integral part of what we are trying to escape—we have to start giving equal priority to those things which happen *outside* of these structures, outside of consensus. That which is outside our formal processes must be actively included in our sociality. This will require care, and work, and may eventually react back on the formal processes. Rather than fetishizing these processes as the bearers of social good, rather than imagining that they could provide the basis for social care, we have to recognize them as only one small part of our sociality, all of which must push constantly towards care. In that push, consensus will no doubt be transformed.

If the occupation movement teaches us only one thing, it is this: it is never too early to begin building the future. For the first time in many years, we have created a space that is set apart from capitalism, and aims to be permanent. This space is already often beautiful, but it provides us with more questions than answers. As Žižek recently wrote: "there is a long road ahead, and soon we will have to address the truly difficult questions—not questions of what we do not want, but about what we do want. What social organization can replace the existing capitalism? What type of new leaders do we need? What organs, including those of control and repression? The 20th-century alternatives obviously did not work.

"Consensus" is not the answer, and cannot be allowed to defer these questions.

Consensus is totally dependent on the presence of a larger state to which it can eject elements that its process has no other means to discipline.

movement into a "black bloc" and a "peaceful" contingent limits the possible tactics to a predetermined list, and destroys relationships between people which could otherwise be productive. Even in its more sophisticated, less media-hype-driven form, the disavowal of one protesting group by another effectively creates an inside and an outside to the movement. One group's role is legitimate dissent; the other group's is illegitimate, nonrepresentative provocation. Distinction of socially valid and invalid voices is inevitably accompanied by the distinction of socially valid and invalid peoples. Tactical discussions are absolutely essential.

has always depended on the ingroup/outgroup distinction. A block (or "no" vote) means, effectively, if this group goes forward with this event, I will leave. And just as much, a consensed-on decision means: if you don't go forward with this, you aren't part of our group. To some degree (though only to *some* degree), the ingroup/outgroup model makes sense for a movement that is well-bounded in space, time, and objective, like the shutdown of a particular governance meeting (WTO, IMF, World Bank, G8, etc). This constituted the vast majority of the actions during the 2000s.



THE AWAKENING *IN* AMERICA

Continued from Page 1

grievances may not constitute a coherent program, but taken as a whole they already imply a fundamental transformation of the system. The nature of that transformation will become clearer as the struggle develops. If the movement ends up forcing the system to come up with some sort of significant, New Deal-type reforms, so much the better — that will temporarily ease conditions so we can more easily push further. If the system proves incapable of implementing any significant reforms, that will force people to look into more radical alternatives. As for cooption, there will indeed be many attempts to take over or manipulate the movement. But I don't think they'll have a very easy time of it. From the beginning the occupation movement has been resolutely antihierarchical and participatory. General assembly decisions are scrupulously democratic and most decisions are taken by consensus — a process which can sometimes be unwieldy, but which has the merit of making any manipulation practically impossible. In fact, the real threat is the other way around: The example of participatory democracy ultimately threatens all hierarchies and social divisions, including those between rank-and-file workers and their union bureaucracies, and between political parties and their constituents. Which is why so many politicians and union bureaucrats are trying to jump on the bandwagon. That is a reflection of our strength, not of our weakness. (Coooption happens when we are tricked into riding in their wagons.) The assemblies may of

anarchist and situationist theories and tactics. As the editor of Adbusters (one of the groups that helped initiate the movement) noted:

"We are not just inspired by what happened in the Arab Spring recently, we are students of the Situationist movement. Those are the people who gave birth to what many people think was the first global revolution back in 1968 when some uprisings in Paris suddenly inspired uprisings all over the world. All of a sudden universities and cities were exploding. This was done by a small group of people, the Situationists, who were like the philosophical backbone of the movement. One of the key guys was Guy Debord, who wrote *The Society of the Spectacle*. The idea is that if you have a very powerful meme — a very powerful idea — and the moment is ripe, then that is enough to ignite a revolution. This is the background that we come out of."

The May 1968 revolt in France was in fact also an "occupation movement" — one of its most notable features was the occupation of the Sorbonne and other public buildings, which then inspired the occupation of factories all over the country by more than 10 million workers. (Needless to say, we are still very far from something like that, which can hardly happen until American workers bypass their union bureaucracies and take collective action on their own, as they did in France.)

As the movement spreads to hundreds of cities, it is important to note that each of the new occupations and assemblies remains totally autonomous. Though inspired by the

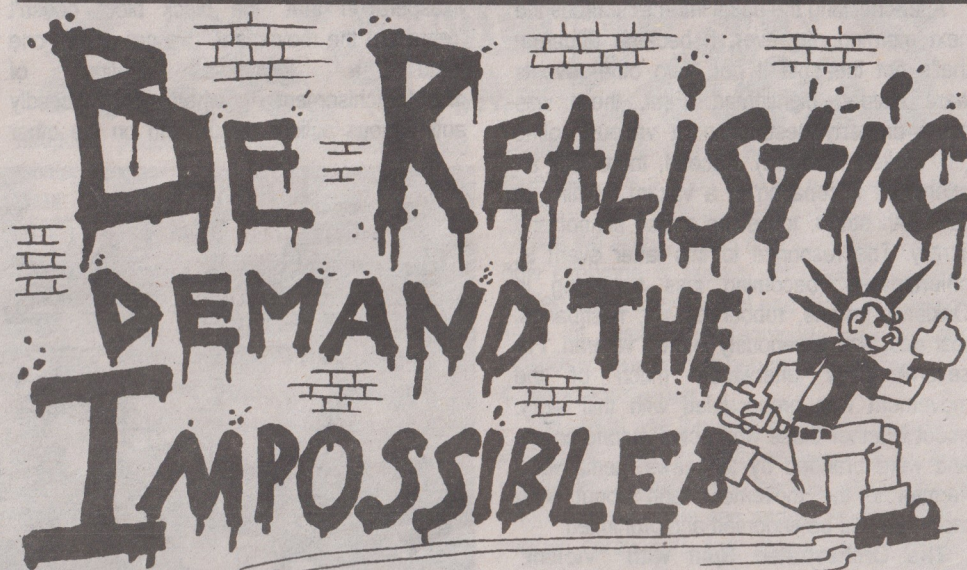
the movement will still be alive and well in a hundred others. More fruitful, because this diversity enables people to share and compare among a wider range of tactics and ideas.

Each assembly is working out its own procedures. Some are operating by strict consensus, others by majority vote, others with

possibilities.

You have to participate to understand what is really going on. Not everyone may be up for joining in the overnight occupations, but practically anyone can take part in the general assemblies. At the Occupy Together website you can find out about occupations (or planned

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various combinations of the two (e.g. a "modified consensus" policy of requiring only 90% agreement). Some are remaining strictly within the law, others are engaging in various kinds of civil disobedience. They are establishing diverse types of committees or "working groups" to deal with particular issues, and diverse methods of ensuring the accountability of delegates or spokespeople. They are making diverse decisions as to how to deal with media, with police and with

occupations) in more than a thousand cities in the United States as well as several hundred others around the world. The occupations are bringing together all sorts of people coming from all sorts of different backgrounds. This can be a new and perhaps unsettling experience for some people, but it's amazing how quickly the barriers break down when you're working together on an exciting collective project. The consensus method may at first seem tedious, especially if an assembly

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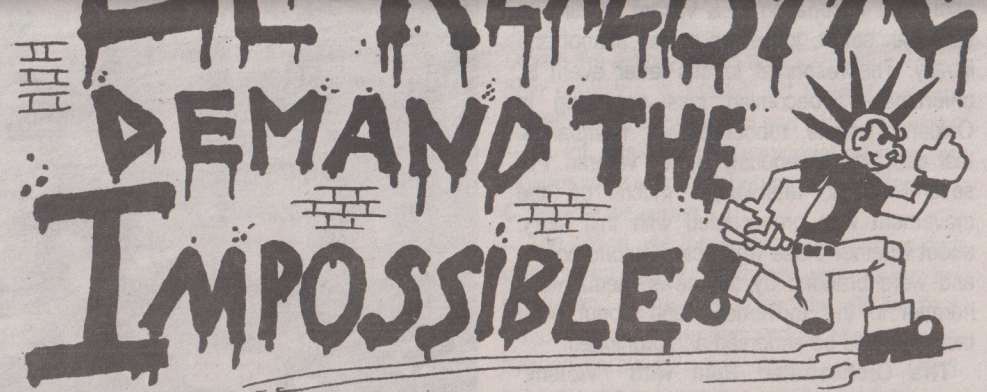
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Revolutions arise out of complex processes of social debate and interaction that happen to reach a critical mass and trigger a chain reaction — processes very much like what we are seeing at this moment.

course agree to collaborate with some political group for a demonstration or with some labor union for a strike, but most of them are taking care that the distinctions remain clear, and practically all of them have sharply distanced themselves from both of the major political parties.

While the movement is eclectic and open to everyone, it is safe to say that its underlying spirit is strongly antiauthoritarian, drawing inspiration not only from recent popular movements in Argentina, Tunisia, Egypt, Greece, Spain and other countries, but from

original Wall Street occupation, they have all been created by the people in their own communities. No outside person or group has the slightest control over any of these assemblies. Which is just as it should be. When the local assemblies see a practical need for coordination, they will coordinate; in the mean time, the proliferation of autonomous groups and actions is safer and more fruitful than the top-down "unity" for which bureaucrats are always appealing. Safer, because it counteracts repression: if the occupation in one city is crushed (or coopted),



various combinations of the two (e.g. a "modified consensus" policy of requiring only 90% agreement). Some are remaining strictly within the law, others are engaging in various kinds of civil disobedience. They are establishing diverse types of committees or "working groups" to deal with particular issues, and diverse methods of ensuring the accountability of delegates or spokespeople. They are making diverse decisions as to how to deal with media, with police and with provocateurs, and adopting diverse ways of collaborating with other groups or causes. Many types of organization are possible; what is essential is that things remain transparent, democratic and participatory, that any tendency toward hierarchy or manipulation is immediately exposed and rejected.

Another new feature of this movement is that, in contrast to previous radical movements that tended to come together around a particular issue on a particular day and then disperse, the current occupations are settling in their locations with no end date. They're there for the long haul, with time to grow roots and experiment with all sorts of new

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In this process we are already getting a taste of a new kind of life, life as it could be if we weren't stuck in such an absurd and anachronistic social system. So much is happening so quickly that we hardly know how to express it. Feelings like: "I can't believe it! Finally! This is it! Or at least it could be it — what we've been waiting for for so long, the sort of human awakening that we've dreamed of but didn't know if it would ever actually happen in our lifetime." Now it's here and I know I'm not the only one with tears of joy. A woman speaking at the first Occupy Oakland general assembly said, "I came here today not just to change the world, but to change myself." I think everyone there knew what she meant. In this brave new world we're all beginners. We're all going to be making lots of mistakes. That is only to be expected, and it's

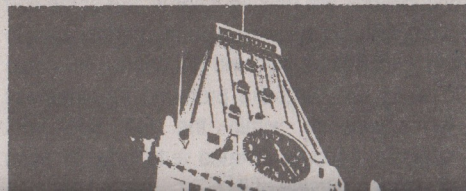
**NO
MORE**



FFICER FRIENDLY

By Carrie H.

When I was young, I had deep reverence for the police. They were noble and courageous men and women in their crisp blue uniforms and shiny badges, those brave souls who protected us from danger, pursued the bad guys, rescued lost children, helped old ladies



spending time at the camp, I was cheered by the diversity of voices, talents and trades that people shared with each other, in pursuit of our common goal of economic justice. I marched with other protesters in downtown Oakland, pleased that the police were honoring our message. They had cleared the streets for our

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Ken Knabb is well known for his translations of numerous works by Guy Debord and the Situationist International. Those translations, as well as his own writings (including "The Joy of Revolution" and several other articles on the Occupy movement), can be found at www.bopsecrets.org.

NO MORE



OFFICER FRIENDLY

By Carrie H.

When I was young, I had deep reverence for the police. They were noble and courageous men and women in their crisp blue uniforms and shiny badges, those brave souls who protected us from danger, pursued the bad guys, rescued lost children, helped old ladies to cross the street. I remember "Officer Friendly" visiting the DARE program at my elementary school, and I remember trusting him. He shared some street safety tips and gave us his phone number to contact him if we ever felt unsafe. My teacher beamed as the officer shook everyone's hand with a warm smile.

As a teenager and young adult, I began to grow wary of the cops. Watching documentary footage of anti-war protests and college campus strikes, I was stunned to see police raging against the crowd, thrashing their batons onto people who wanted our nation to give peace a chance. It struck me as a terrible hypocrisy that peaceful citizens could be physically assaulted by cops as a form of "crowd control." That is not very friendly, Officer. At this age I also began experimenting with such subversive activities as driving aimlessly with friends and smoking pot in the Denny's parking lot before stuffing ourselves



full of pancakes and omelets. Obviously we kept a sharp lookout for the po-po, which was the only threat to our good times once we had escaped our parents. I became more aware of suburban police hiding on side streets to catch speedy drivers, and I listened to my parents complain about "those damn sneaky cops." I still respected the police but mostly I tried to avoid them at all costs.

I moved to Oakland in late 2011 and was inspired by the Occupy movement. While

spending time at the camp, I was cheered by the diversity of voices, talents and trades that people shared with each other, in pursuit of our common goal of economic justice. I marched with other protesters in downtown Oakland, pleased that the police were honoring our message. They had cleared the streets for our peaceful demonstration. No one was standing in our way! Until, of course, a few days later, when hundreds of riot cops raided and obliterated the encampment using violent force. I was shocked at the actions and the aftermath. Tents and other property ripped to shreds. My friends were tear-gassed. My co-workers were afraid to leave our downtown office. My roommate was hit several times with a baton and came home with an enormous bruise on her chest. Because that is exactly how you protect citizens and keep the peace, right?

I am flabbergasted by these obscene measures of police brutality against nonviolent demonstrators. We are in a war zone, defending ourselves against the same people who are supposed to have public safety as their top priority. There is no justification for this. No reason and no excuses. And now, there is no going back. No more Officer Friendly. No more childhood innocence.

Slingshot Back Issues

We'll send you a random assortment of back issues of Slingshot for the cost of postage: Send \$3 for 2 lbs. Free if you're an infoshop or library. Also, our full-color, 200 page coffee table book about People's Park is free or by sliding scale donation: send \$1 - \$25 for a copy. PO Box 3051 Berkeley, CA 94703.

An Open Letter From OUR Comrades in Egypt

To all those in the United States currently occupying parks, squares and other spaces, your comrades in Cairo are watching you in solidarity. Having received so much advice from you about transitioning to democracy, we thought it's our turn to pass on some advice.

Indeed, we are now in many ways involved in the same struggle. What most pundits call "The Arab Spring" has its roots in the demonstrations, riots, strikes and occupations taking place all around the world, its foundations lie in years-long struggles by people and popular movements. The moment that we find ourselves in is nothing new, as we in Egypt and others have been fighting against systems of repression, disenfranchisement and the unchecked ravages of global capitalism (yes, we said it, capitalism): a System that has made a world that is dangerous and cruel to its inhabitants. As the interests of government increasingly cater to the interests and comforts of private, transnational capital, our cities and homes have become progressively more abstract and violent places, subject to the casual ravages of the next economic development or urban renewal scheme.

An entire generation across the globe has grown up realizing, rationally and emotionally, that we have no future in the current order of things. Living under structural adjustment policies and the supposed expertise of international organizations like the World Bank and IMF, we watched as our resources, industries and public services were sold off and dismantled as the "free market" pushed an addiction to foreign goods, to foreign food even. The profits and benefits of those freed markets went elsewhere, while Egypt and other countries in the South found their immiseration reinforced by a massive increase in police repression and torture.

The current crisis in America and Western Europe has begun to bring this reality home to you as well: that as things stand we will all work ourselves raw, our backs broken by personal debt and public austerity. Not content with carving out the remnants of the public sphere and the welfare state, capitalism

What you do in these spaces is neither as grandiose and abstract nor as quotidian as "real democracy"; the nascent forms of praxis and social engagement being made in the occupations avoid the empty ideals and stale parliamentarianism that the term democracy has come to represent. And so the occupations must continue, because there is no one left to ask for reform. They must continue because we are creating what we can no longer wait for.

But the ideologies of property and propriety will manifest themselves again. Whether through the overt opposition of property owners or municipalities to your encampments or the more subtle attempts to control space through traffic regulations, anti-camping laws or health and safety rules. There is a direct conflict between what we seek to make of our cities and our spaces and what the law and the systems of policing standing behind it would have us do.

We faced such direct and indirect violence, and continue to face it. Those who said that the Egyptian revolution was peaceful did not see the horrors that police visited upon us, nor did they see the resistance and even force that revolutionaries used against the police to defend their tentative occupations and spaces: by the government's own admission; 99 police stations were put to the torch, thousands of police cars were destroyed, and all of the ruling party's offices around Egypt were burned down. Barricades were erected, officers were beaten back and pelted with rocks even as they fired tear gas and live ammunition on us. But at the end of the day on the 28th of January they retreated, and we had won our cities.

It is not our desire to participate in violence, but it is even less our desire to lose.

If we do not resist, actively, when they come to take what we have won back, then we will surely lose. Do not confuse the tactics that we used when we shouted "peaceful" with fetishizing nonviolence; if the state had given up immediately we would have been overjoyed, but as they sought to abuse us, beat us, kill us, we knew that there was no other option than to fight back. Had we laid down and allowed ourselves to be arrested, tortured, and martyred to

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The current crisis in America and Western Europe has begun to bring this reality home to you as well: that as things stand we will all work ourselves raw, our backs broken by personal debt and public austerity. Not content with carving out the remnants of the public sphere and the welfare state, capitalism and the austerity-state now even attack the private realm and people's right to decent dwelling as thousands of foreclosed-upon homeowners find themselves both homeless and indebted to the banks who have forced them on to the streets.

So we stand with you not just in your attempts to bring down the old but to experiment with the new. We are not protesting. Who is there to protest to? What could we ask them for that they could grant? We are occupying. We are reclaiming those same spaces of public practice that have been commodified, privatized and locked into the hands of faceless bureaucracy, real estate portfolios, and police 'protection'. Hold on to these spaces, nurture them, and let the boundaries of your occupations grow. After all, who built these parks, these plazas, these buildings? Whose labor made them real and livable? Why should it seem so natural that they should be withheld from us, policed and disciplined? Reclaiming these spaces and managing them justly and collectively is proof enough of our legitimacy.

In our own occupations of Tahrir, we encountered people entering the Square every day in tears because it was the first time they had walked through those streets and spaces without being harassed by police; it is not just the ideas that are important, these spaces are fundamental to the possibility of a new world. These are public spaces. Spaces for gathering, leisure, meeting, and interacting - these spaces should be the reason we live in cities. Where the state and the interests of owners have made them inaccessible, exclusive or

regulations, anti-camping laws or health and safety rules. The conflict between what we seek to make of our cities and our spaces and what the law and the systems of policing standing behind it would have us do.

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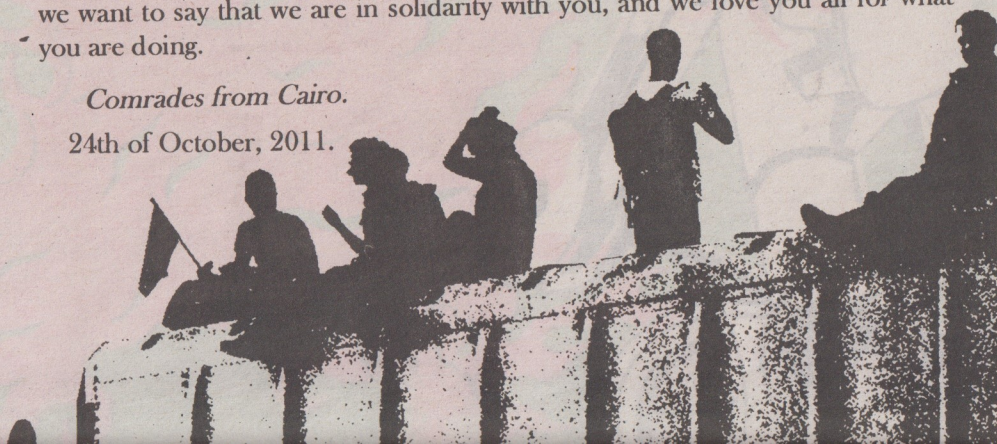
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By way of concluding then, our only real advice to you is to continue, keep going and do not stop. Occupy more, find each other, build larger and larger networks and keep discovering new ways to experiment with social life, consensus, and democracy. Discover new ways to use these spaces, discover new ways to hold on to them and never give them up again. Resist fiercely when you are under attack, but otherwise take pleasure in what you are doing, let it be easy, fun even. We are all watching one another now, and from Cairo we want to say that we are in solidarity with you, and we love you all for what you are doing.

Comrades from Cairo.

24th of October, 2011.



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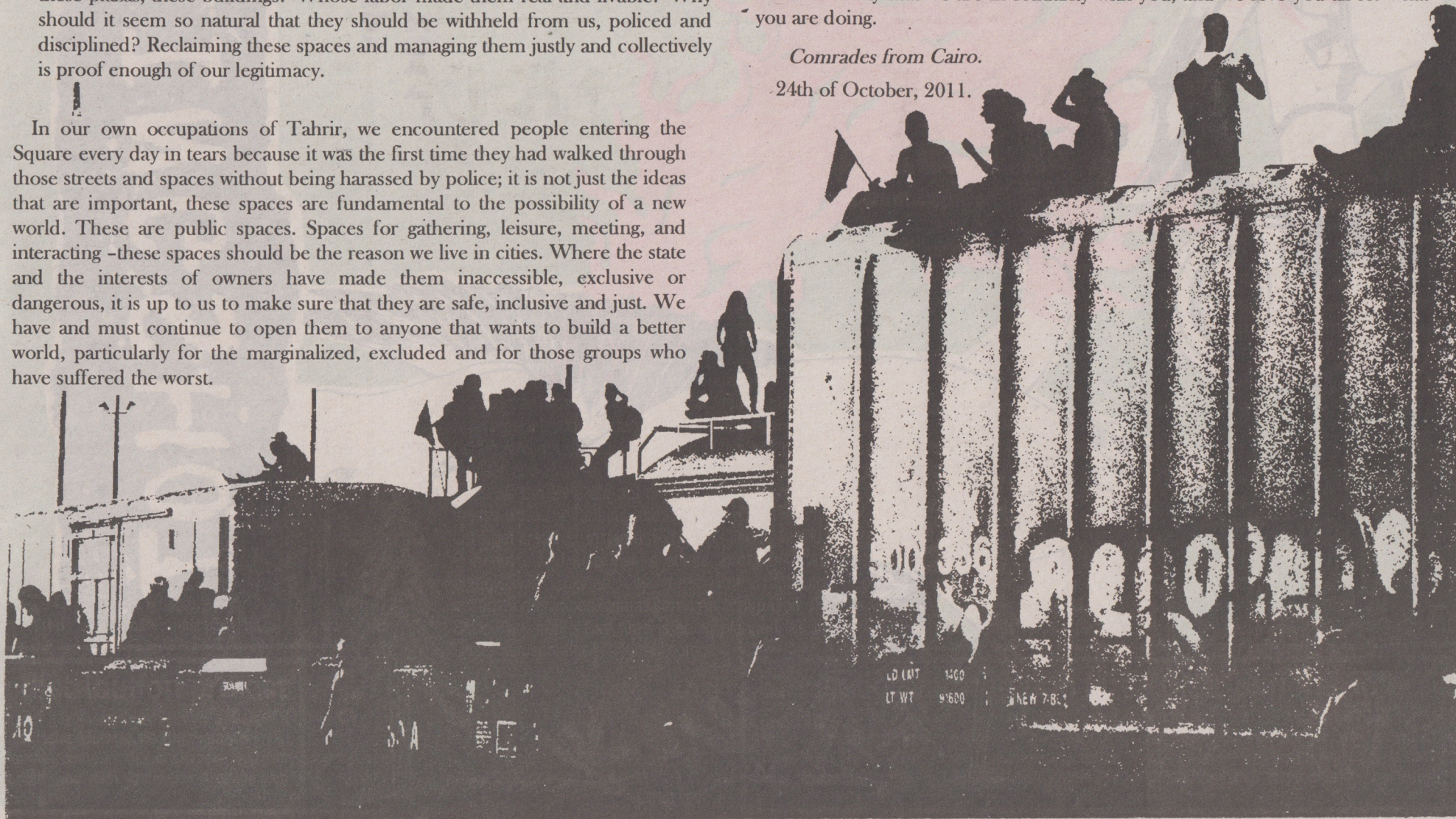
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December 20 - 31

Occupy the Holidays! Bring discussions about class, inequality and whether capitalism is working out to your family celebration everywhere. A decentralized, spontaneous action...

December 30 • 6 pm

Critical Mass bike ride - last Friday of each month in San Francisco and worldwide. In SF @ Justin Herman plaza

January 7-8

North American Anarchist Studies Network conference - San Juan, Puerto Rico naasn.org

January 14 • 3 pm

Article deadline for issue #109 Long Haul 3124 Shattuck Ave. Berkeley

February 21 • 3 pm

Mardi Gras - Berkeley parade at People's Park

February 29

Leap day action night - do something with an extra day, at night - leapdayaction.org

March 8

International Women's Day

May 1

International Worker's Day - can we finally join the rest of the world and celebrate right in 2012?

May 5

Protest American Psychiatric Association national meeting - Philadelphia www.mindfreedom.org

May 15-22

Resist the NATO and G8 summits in Chicago

July 25-28

Shut down ALEC (American Legislative Exchange Council) in Salt Lake City

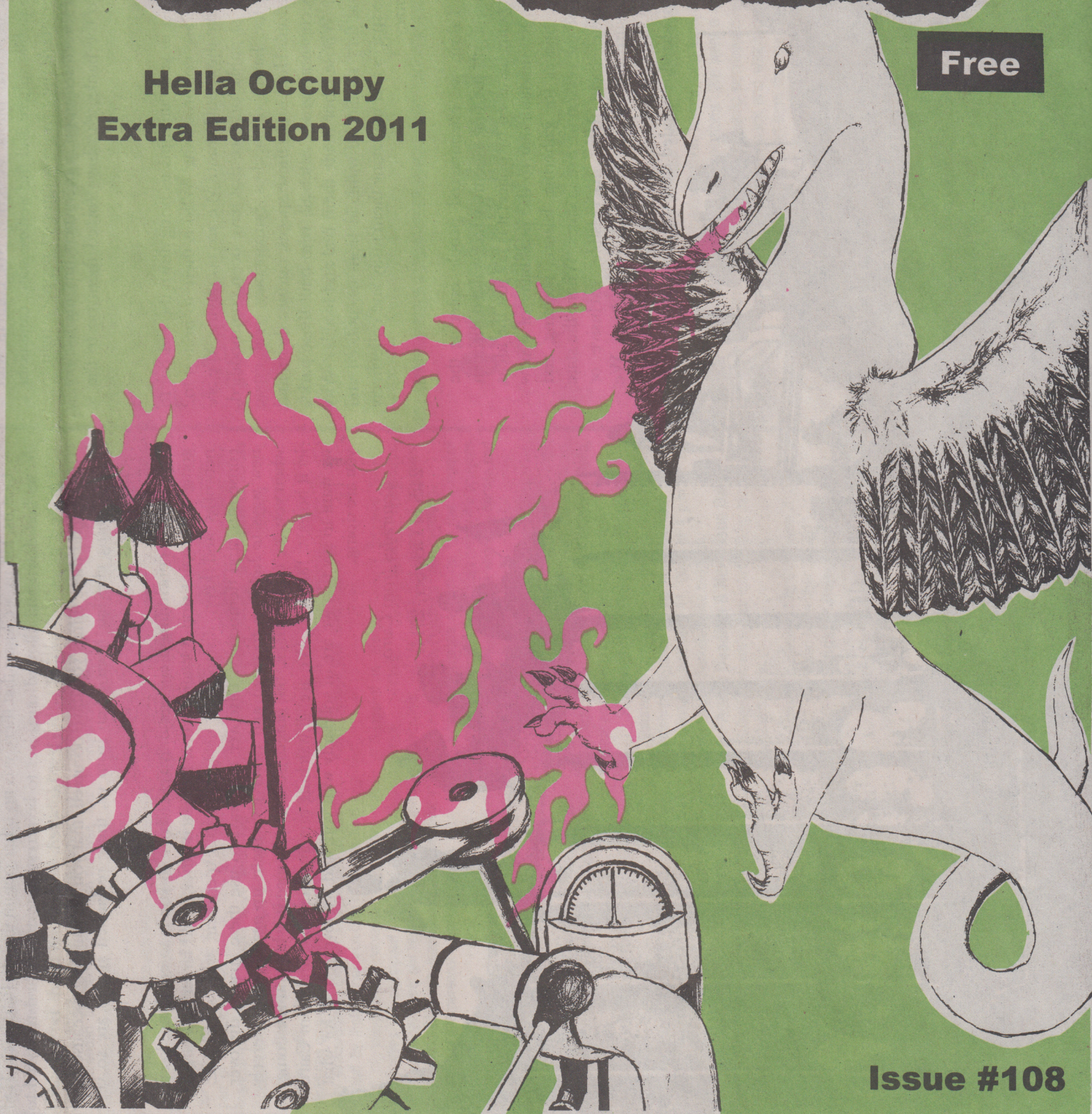
Note: there are too many Occupy related calendar events happening in villages and cities worldwide to even possibly list or comprehend. Check your local occupation. For links to occupations everywhere, check occupytogether.org

In any case, no regrets

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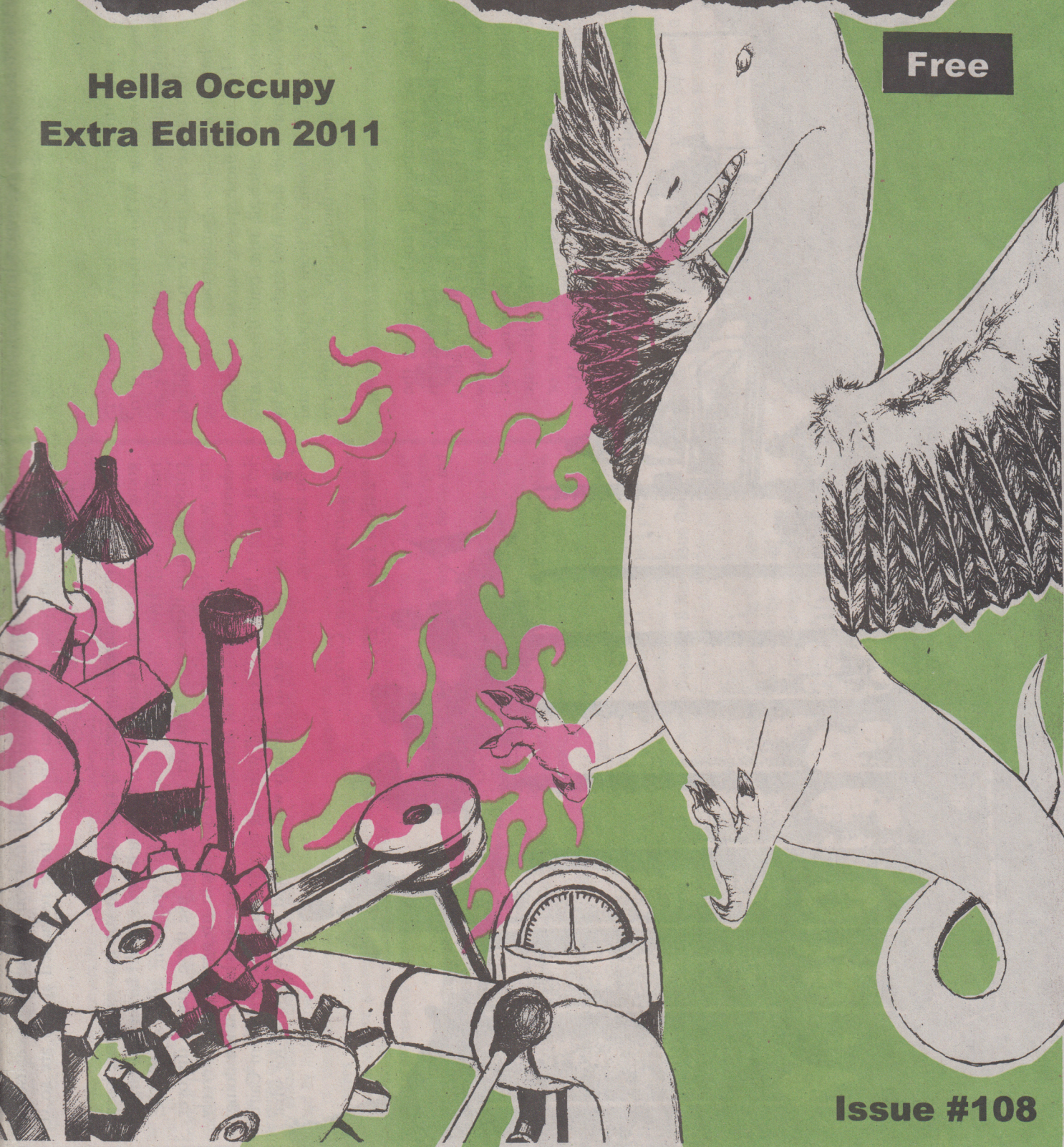


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